

THE GLOBE

GLOBEN LE GLOBE DER GLOBUS
EL GLOBO OGLOBO विश्व द ग्लोब گلوب

**VOTE! RÖSTA!
¡VOTA! WÄHLT!**
வாக்களிப்பீர் ராய் தேர்தல்
ဆန္ဒပေးကြည့်ခြင်း! मत
തീരുമാനിക്കുക! !: ووت
လွှဲကမ်း! स्तदान
!: صوت! ووت
HÃY BẦU!



WORLD'S CHILDREN'S PRIZE FOR
THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

PRIX DES ENFANTS DU MONDE
POUR LES DROITS DE L'ENFANT

PREMIO DE LOS NIÑOS DEL MUNDO
POR LOS DERECHOS DEL NIÑO

PRÊMIO DAS CRIANÇAS DO MUNDO
PELOS DIREITOS DA CRIANÇA

DER PREIS DER KINDER DER WELT
FÜR DIE RECHTE DES KINDES!

बाल अधिकारों हेतु विश्व
बाल पुरस्कार

बाल अधिकारका लागी
विश्व बाल पुरस्कार

بچوں کے حقوق کے انعام کا عالمی پروگرام

Hi!

The Globe magazine is for you and all other young people taking part in the World's Children's Prize program. Here you'll meet friends from all over the world, learn about your rights and get some tips on what you can do to make the world a little better!

World's Child for the Rights of the



Gabriel Mejia Montoya



Rachel Lloyd



Valeriu Nicolae



The girl on the front cover of The Globe is Neeta from Nepal, speaking at the World's Children's Prize Award Ceremony. Neeta is both a Child Rights Ambassador and a member of WCP's Child Jury.



The lottery for a better world

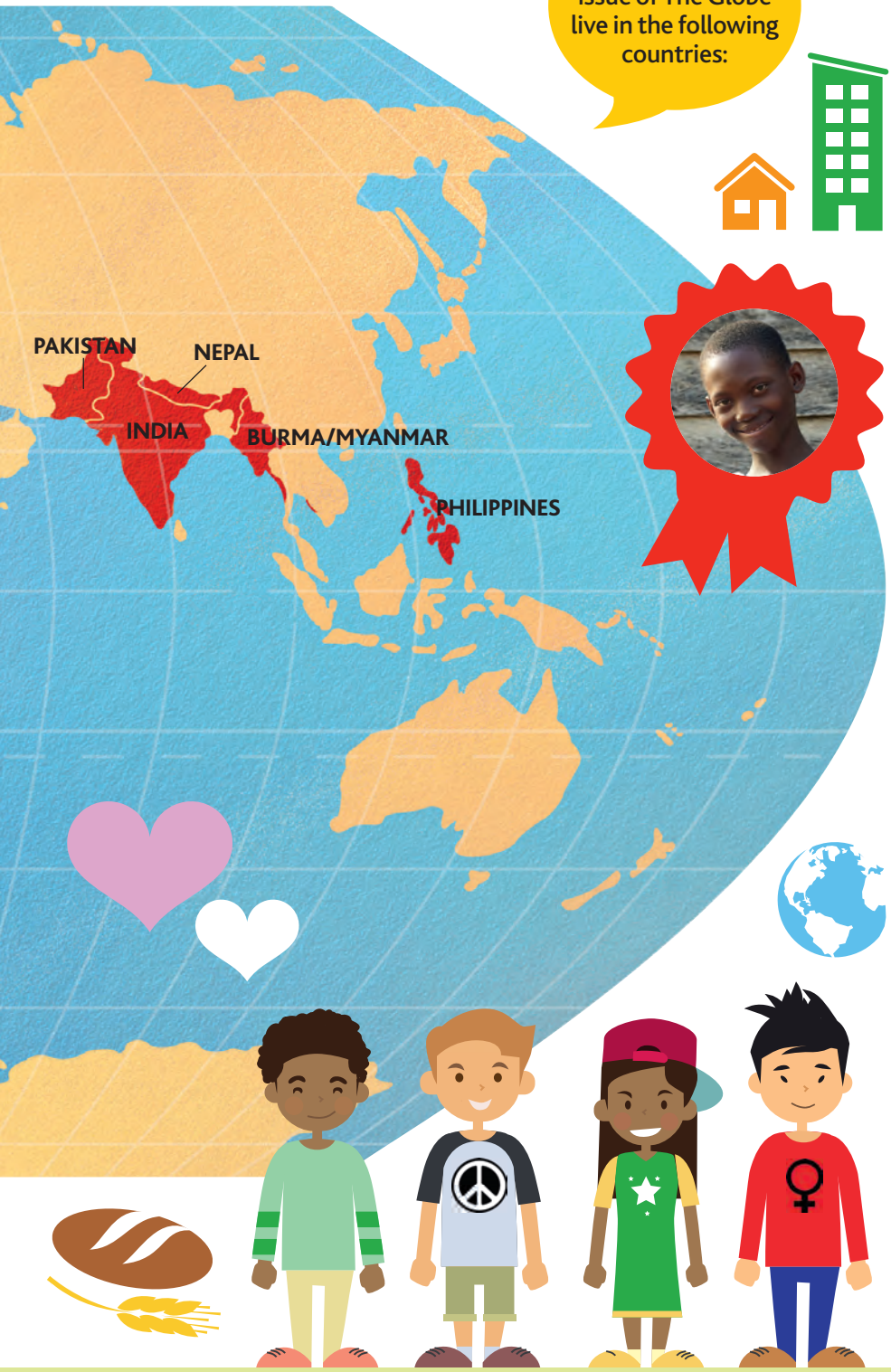
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! شكريه !: တာ်ဘျးး စဝပုဂ္ဂံ စံုကံးး ! سپاس نرهننررر دهننننن مهرباني !

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ren's Prize Child

The people in this issue of The Globe live in the following countries:



What is the World's Children's Prize? 4

Meet the Child Jury! 6

Determined Child Rights Ambassador on the Jury 9

What are the rights of the child? 10

How are the world's children? 12

The road to democracy 14

Global Vote around the world 17

Come with us on a journey to Burma, Cameroon and other countries. Meet Child Rights Ambassadors and children who vote for their rights!

This year's Child Rights Heroes

Gabriel Antonio Mejía Montoya 46

Rachel Lloyd 66

Valeriu Nicolae 86

World's Children's Press Conference 106

We are patrons of the World's Children's Prize 107

We're celebrating the rights of the child 108

No Litter Generation 109

No Litter Day 116



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What is the World's Ch

Want to be a changemaker to make the world a better place? Just like the Child Rights Heroes and many of the children in The Globe. Then the World's Children's Prize program (WCP) can help you. By getting to know the brave Child Rights Heroes and children all around the world, you'll learn more about:

- Compassion
- The equal worth of all persons
- The Rights of the Child
- Human rights
- How democracy works
- How to fight against injustice, poverty, racism and oppression
- The UN's Global Goals, which have been agreed by the countries of the world to protect the environment and make the world a fairer place by 2030.

Be a changemaker!

Take the opportunity to become a changemaker and stand up for the equal worth and rights of all people! You can make your voice heard and influence life where you live, in your country and around the world, now and in the future. Together with millions of other children, you can be involved in building a more compassionate world in which everyone is treated equally, where the Rights of the Child are respected and where people and the planet thrive.



The World's Children's Prize program runs from November 2017 until 16 May 2018. You can report the results of your vote up until 16 April.

Rights and democracy in your life

Start by finding out whether the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is really being respected where you live, for example at school. Talk about: How things can be improved for children in your town and in your country? Can you make your voice heard about issues that affect you and your friends? Study the history of democracy and, if you want to, start a WCP Child Rights Club at your school!

PAGES 10–11, 14–16



Did you know?

The WCP program is the world's largest annual education initiative about the equal value of all people, the Rights of the Child, democracy and sustainable development.

Make it a celebration

At the big WCP Ceremony at Gripsholm Castle in Mariefred, Sweden, which is led by the Child Jury, all the Child Rights Heroes are honoured and receive prize money to support their work for children. Queen Silvia helps the members of the Child Jury to present the awards. Many schools organise their own closing ceremony later, where they show a film from the WCP Ceremony and celebrate the Rights of the Child.

PAGE 108



On 16 May*, children in Global Friend schools around the world will be celebrating *No Litter Day*. Show you are part of the No Litter Generation by picking up litter in your town, in the schoolyard and on the streets. And take the opportunity to talk to others about the right to a clean and healthy environment for you and all other children around the world.

PAGES 109–116

No Litter Generation



* No Litter Day is on 16 May, but your school can choose to celebrate it any day during week 20.

Children's Prize?

The Rights of the Child around the world



The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child applies to all children, everywhere. Learn more through meeting the Child Jury, WCP Child Rights Ambassadors and the children they fight to protect and empower. Find out what life is really like for the world's children right now.

PAGES 6–9, 12–13, 17–45



Meet the Child Rights Heroes

Every year, three amazing Child Rights Heroes are nominated as candidates for the World's Children's Prize. Get to know them and the children they fight for through their life stories.

PAGES 46–105



So far 40.6 million children all over the world have learned about the Rights of the Child and democracy through the WCP program. Over 70,000 schools in 116 countries have registered as Global Friend schools and support the World's Children's Prize.



The big announcement!

When the votes of millions of children have been added up, an announcement is made revealing which of the nominated Child Rights Heroes has received the most votes and is therefore the recipient of *The World's Children's Prize for the Rights of the Child*, along with which two will receive the *World's Children's Prize Honorary Award*. Gather your whole school to announce the results! Or invite the local media to a *World's Children's Press Conference*, which is held at the same time in several different countries. Present the Child Rights Heroes and talk about what improvements you'd like to see in terms of respecting the Rights of the Child.

PAGE 106

The Global Vote



Once you've learned all there is to know about the Rights of the Child and the nominated Child Rights Heroes, you can get involved in the Global Vote. Set a date for your Global Vote in plenty of time and prepare everything you need for a democratic election, from appointing election observers to making ballot boxes. Invite the media, parents and politicians to experience your Global Vote Day. Report the result of your school's vote via the ballot box at worldschildrensprize.org.

PAGES 17–45

Follow us on social media!

www.worldschildrensprize.org

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- worldschildrensprize
- @wcpfoundation



Age limit for the World's Children's Prize

The WCP program is open for anyone from the year they turn ten until the year they turn 18 (the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child says that you're a child until you turn 18). The lower age limit is there for several reasons. In order to be able to participate in the Global Vote, you must learn all about the work of the nominees. The children they fight for have often been through terrible things, and their stories can be frightening for younger children. Even older children may find it difficult, which is why it's important to have adults to talk to when you're working with the WCP program.





The 2017 Child Jury with Queen Silvia and Sweden's Minister for Children, Åsa Regnér.

Meet the Child Jury!

The members of the World's Children's Prize Child Jury are experts on the rights of the child through their own life experiences. Each Jury child primarily represents all the children in the world who share their experiences. They also represent children of their own country and continent. Whenever possible, the Jury includes children from all continents and all major religions.

- ♥ The Jury members share their life stories and the violations of the rights of the child they have experienced themselves or that they campaign against. In this way, they teach millions of children around the world about the rights of the child. They can be members of the Jury until the end of the year they turn 18.
- ♥ Every year, the Child Jury selects the three final candidates for the *World's Children's Prize for the Rights of the Child* from all those who have been nominated.
- ♥ The Jury members are ambassadors for the World's Children's Prize in their home countries and throughout the world.
- ♥ The Child Jury leads the annual World's Children's Prize Award Ceremony in Sweden. During that week the Jury children visit schools and talk about their lives and about the rights of the child.

At www.worldschildrensprize.org you'll find more stories about the children of the Jury and also get to meet former Jury members.

We haven't written out the surnames of our Jury children, to protect their identities. Five new members will be elected to the Child Jury for WCP 2018.



The Child Jury members help each other with everything, even hairstyles!



Jhonn



Dieu-Merci



Netta



Shamoon



Neeta

♥ JHONN NARA, 17

BRAZIL

Represents children who belong to indigenous groups and fights for their rights and for children who have been the victims of abuse and who have been affected by environmental degradation.

Jhonn Nara lives in Amazonas in Brazil and is one of the youngest leaders of the Guarani indigenous people. They used to live deep in the jungle, but her people have since been chased out of their villages. The rainforest has been cut down and replaced with cattle ranches and industries that pollute the environment with toxic chemicals and contaminated water. Now the Guarani people are living in roadside camps, where they can neither fish nor hunt. Poverty has led to the adults suffering from depression, and turning to drink, drugs and fighting. Jhonn Nara herself has been abused by a violent stepfather.

The Guarani people are subjected to threats and violence by those who want to earn money from cutting down the forest and exploiting the land. When Jhonn Nara was 10, a group of masked men came to her village and shot and killed her grandfather, who was one of the leaders of her people.

“When we protest, we are threatened, abused and killed. They want to get rid of us, but we’ll never give up,” says Jhonn Nara, who is saddened when she and other indigenous children are treated worse than other pupils in school. “It really hurts.”

♥ DIEU-MERCI, 16

DR CONGO

Represents children forced to become soldiers and children in armed conflict situations

Dieu-Merci was forced to become a soldier.

“We were on our way home from school when we were surrounded by men with weapons who shouted: ‘Sit down! Don’t try and run away or we’ll

kill you!’ The girls were taken off in one direction. Us boys were marched into the forest. We begged the kidnappers to let us go, but they tore up our school books and burned them. I couldn’t stop thinking about my family, and about death. One of the leaders said: ‘You are going to become soldiers for your own safety, for your families and for our country! Anyone who refuses will be our enemy!’ We hardly got anything to eat; we shared a small bird and ate leaves and wild fruit. Every day we were given a drink that was supposed to protect us from enemy bullets. Later, when we were sent to capture other children, I always tried to secretly help them get away. I managed to save 37 children. One night as we were fighting, I tried to escape. Instead I was captured by government soldiers. When they were about to shoot me I shouted that I was just a school kid who had been kidnapped.”

Dieu-Merci is free now. He goes to school and is given support by an organisation that helps children who were forced to become soldiers.

“They’ve helped me and I feel empowered to take charge of my life again.”

♥ NETTA, 17

ISRAEL

Represents children in conflict zones and children who want a dialogue for peace.

Netta grew up in Israel and remembers all the times that fighting broke out near her home.

“I particularly remember the war that was happening when I was little.

My parents were so worried that something would happen to me and my sister, so they sent us to live with my aunts. We didn’t get to see mum and dad for a long time. It was scary. We were very worried and scared and we didn’t understand what was happening or why we couldn’t live at home! I remember thinking: ‘I don’t want to die, I don’t want to leave my home!’”

Netta believes that dialogue – talking to one another – is the best way to achieve peace.

♥ SHAMOON, 15

PAKISTAN

Represents child labourers, slave children and children who ‘don’t exist’, because their births were never registered.

Shamoon was born into a family that had been debt slaves for a brick kiln owner since his dad was a boy. Everyone was forced to work from morning till night to pay off an old debt of about 600 US dollars. Shamoon’s dad fought for the rights of the brick kiln workers and opened an evening school for the children. The brick kiln owner didn’t like this, and Shamoon’s dad was forced to flee. The next morning, the owner sent for Shamoon and his mum.

“Mum had told me that the owner would kill dad if we told him where he was. The owner beat me with a stick. That’s when I realised that we were slaves.”

It was another two years before the kiln owner agreed not to hurt Shamoon’s dad, so he could come home. Shamoon’s family are not debt slaves anymore, but they still work at a brick kiln. Shamoon goes to school and helps with the work when he can.

“In the evenings I have evening school for the children and young people from the brick kiln. Education makes them brave and able to help their families. Education is the path to freedom!”

♥ NEETA, 14

NEPAL

Represents children who have been exploited in the child sex trade.

When Neeta was 11 years old, she was persuaded by a friend to bunk off school and go with her to the capital, Kathmandu. They were planning to have some fun and go exploring. Instead, Neeta was left in Kathmandu at a bar with people she didn’t know. She was drugged and subjected to terrible abuse. When she cried and begged to be allowed to go home, she was beaten by the bar’s owner and locked in a room.



Milad



Annanthi



Taree



Noor

In the end, a young man who worked at the bar promised to help Neeta and three other girls escape. Actually he planned to sell them on, but when they arrived at the main bus station, the guards became suspicious. They called the police and Neeta was taken to a home for girls who had been victims of the child sex trade. She got help there to report the man to the police. He's in prison now.

"I'm grateful that I was given a second chance in life. Now I'm a member of a child rights club and I campaign for children's rights," says Neeta.

♥ MILAD, 15

SYRIA

Represents displaced children and children growing up in war zones.

Milad was forced to flee from the war in Syria when he was nine years old. The route went from his home city of Aleppo in Syria, to Kobane, and then on to Turkey.

"It was hard to survive there. Thousands of new refugees were arriving every day, and there were lots of children begging on the street. I worked in a factory, because there was no school."

After two years, Milad's mum said that he had to get to Europe so he could go to school. Lots of refugees were making the journey across the Mediterranean, but thousands died when their overcrowded boats capsized. So the family saved up money and paid a trafficker. During the journey they disappeared for several days. The family was very worried. When the smuggler finally got in touch, he demanded more money to let Milad go.

Today, Milad lives in Sweden with his family, who also got to join him. He's happy in Sweden, but he misses his best friend back in Aleppo.

"My city has been destroyed by bombing, it's tragic. I'm grateful that I was able to come, because we would have died in Syria," says Milad. "Now I'm worried about others. We can't just think about ourselves."

♥ ANNANTHI, 14

INDIA

Represents children at risk of being forced into child marriage and girls at risk of being killed at birth.

When Annanthi was little, her mum said: "We were planning to kill you, but we let you live." In their village, many girls have been killed at birth for as long as anyone can remember, because of poverty and the view that daughters are of less value than sons. But now hundreds of villages in the region have almost completely eradicated the tradition of killing baby girls. The girls have been given help to attend school and their parents have been given education and support.

"Now they know that girls are a gift, not a punishment," says Annanthi. "Why don't people understand that a girl has just as much value – that she can take care of her family just as well, if not better, than a boy? I plan to do everything I can to show everyone that all girls have the right to live."

Child marriage is common in Annanthi's village, but she doesn't plan to marry until she's at least 25. First she wants to get an education and a good job.

"They might try and marry me off earlier, but I'll fight it. My husband will be kind and share the housework. And my education will be my dowry (money and things that the woman's family must give to the man's family)."

♥ TAREE, 14

USA

Represents children who are homeless.

When Taree was nine, he became one of 2.5 million homeless children in the US who live in shelters, in cars, at dilapidated hotels or on the street. Taree's family lived in a shelter, where homeless people are offered a place to sleep, with his mum and five siblings. It was in the homeless area of Los Angeles, where thousands of people live on the street.

"My family had one room and shared

the toilet and shower with others. The hardest thing about being homeless was moving around and changing schools so often. I worried a lot about the future and how I would help my family to survive. Sometimes it was hard to stay motivated. But my mom has always helped us to believe in ourselves, and luckily I like school. Math makes me happy!"

Taree's family now finally has their own home. Sometimes he helps children who are still homeless with their school work. When he's older he wants to be an author. "I like writing my own stories. If I succeed in becoming a writer I'll help my family first, then other homeless people."

♥ NOOR, 16

PALESTINE

Represents children in conflict zones, children who live under occupation and children who support dialogue for peace.

"My first memory of the sound of gunshots is from the middle of the night, when I was four. We raced down to the basement. Later when we tried to come back up, my grandmother's room was on fire and there were bullet holes and shrapnel everywhere. Some time ago, while we were sitting an exam in school, a tear gas grenade was suddenly fired into the classroom. My eyes felt like they were burning and it was hard to breathe. My friends and I ran home, but Israeli soldiers stopped us and forced us to turn back. I was so upset and scared, I felt weak and completely powerless. We told them that we were just innocent children. When I eventually made it home, I burst into tears. My grandmother read from the Koran to comfort me, and gave me olive oil to drink. Her advice was to carry on with my education, and I love school." Noor doesn't like soldiers, but she wants her people to be able to live as neighbours and friends with the Israeli people.

"We should respect their faith and they ours. We must respect one another!"

Headmaster persuaded by determined Child Rights Ambassador Kim

Kim, 12, in Zimbabwe was the first WCP Child Rights Ambassador. After her headmaster tried to prevent it several times, she was able to start a WCP Child Rights Club and has now educated thousands of children about their rights. Today she is also on the World's Children's Prize Child Jury, where she represents empowered children who stand up for the rights of the child, and in particular for equal rights for girls.

"Growing up I looked on in sorrow as children suffered in silence, as some children were denied access to education, some were beaten mercilessly while young girls were victims of sexual abuse and child marriage.

"I did not know that as children we have rights. I then received training on child rights along with my other friends. This made me realise how much we needed to have more children trained at our school."

Headmaster said no

"I then approached our school head to allow a Child Rights Club to be started. After being denied this a number of times, I persisted until I convinced him to introduce the WCP Child Rights Club at our school. This is how I became a WCP Child Rights Ambassador in my school and community.

"After I convinced the headmaster, I felt we still had to conduct community club meetings that would bring together all the girls from surrounding schools that had not yet been allowed to have this kind of club at their school. This brought together girls from various schools, as well as those girls that are out of school that wanted to be involved in learning about their rights. We have now empowered many members of the Child Rights Clubs to teach other children in their communities about their rights."

My ambassador role

"My role as a WCP Child Rights Ambassador to all girls and boys in my community and beyond is to educate and empower children.

"I also play a role in advocating for the voices of those who are suffering in silence



Kim at the podium at the 2017 WCP Award Ceremony at Gripsholm Castle in Mariefred, Sweden.

without speaking out, either because of lack of knowledge or limited empowerment. My role is to openly speak out about child rights violations in every sphere and space where children grow and develop.

"My focus on girls' rights is mainly aimed at advocating for a total end to child marriage, as well as respect for girls' rights to sanitation in schools."

Will bring change

"Being given the chance to be a WCP Child Rights Ambassador is an honour. It means the world to me. And I know that there will be change in this world of ours. Now I am an empowered young girl who can empower others. And this makes me feel important and part of the generation that will bring change for the better for children. Being active in the program has given me the opportunity to work towards achieving the change I wish to see."



Kim teaches other children about the rights of the child.



Kim proudly shows her Child Rights Ambassador diploma. All children around the world who are trained as WCP Child Rights Ambassadors are given a diploma like this.



Celebrate the rights of the child

Fira barnets rättigheter

Célébre les droits de l'enfant

Celebre os Direitos da Criança



The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child applies to you and all other children under 18. All the countries in the world except the USA* have ratified (pledged to follow) the Convention. This means they must put children's best interests first and listen to what children have to say.

Basic principles of the Convention:

- All children are equal and have the same rights.
- Every child has the right to have his or her basic needs fulfilled.
- Every child has the right to protection from abuse and exploitation.
- Every child has the right to express his or her opinion and to be respected.

What is a convention?

A convention is an international agreement, a contract between countries. The Convention on the Rights of the Child is one of the six UN conventions on human rights.

The right to complain!

Children whose rights have been violated can submit complaints directly to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, if they have not received help in their home country. This has become possible thanks to OP3, a relatively new protocol to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Children in countries that have approved the protocol therefore have better chances of making their voices heard regarding their rights. Sweden has not yet approved the protocol. You and your friends can contact your politicians and demand that they do so.

* USA has *signed* the Convention but that is not legally binding.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child brings together a long series of rights that apply to all the children in the world. We have summarised a few of them here.

Article 1

These rights apply to all children under 18 in the world.

Article 2

All children have the same rights and should not be discriminated against.

Nobody should treat you badly because of your appearance, your skin colour, your gender, your language, your religion, or your opinions.

Article 3

Those who make decisions affecting children must put the interests of the children first.

Article 6

You have the right to life and the right to develop.

Article 7

You have the right to a name and a nationality.

Article 9

You have the right to live with your parents unless it's bad for you.

You have the right to be brought up by your parents, if possible.

Articles 12–15

All children have the right to say what they think. You are to be consulted and your opinions respected in all matters concerning you – at home, at school and by the authorities and the courts.

Article 18

Your parents are jointly responsible for your upbringing and development. They must always put your interests first.

Article 19

You have the right to protection from all forms of violence, neglect, abuse and mistreatment. You should not be exploited by your parents or other guardians.

Articles 20–21

You are entitled to receive care if you have lost your family.

Article 22

If you have been forced to leave your country you have the same rights as all the other children in your new country. If you are alone you have the right to special protection and help. If possible you should be reunited with your family.

Article 23

All children have the right to a good life. If you are disabled you have the right to extra support and help.

Article 24

When you are sick you have the right to receive all the help and care you need.

Articles 28–29

You have the right to go to school and to learn important things, such as respect for human rights and respect for other cultures.

Article 30

The thoughts and beliefs of every child should be respected. If you belong to a minority you have the right to your own language, your own culture and your own religion.

Article 31

You have the right to play, rest and free time, and the right to live in a healthy environment.

Article 32

You should not be forced to do hazardous work that prevents your schooling and damages your health.

Article 34

No one should subject you to abuse or force you into prostitution. If you are treated badly you are entitled to protection and help.

Article 35

No one is allowed to kidnap or sell you.

Article 37

No one should punish you in a cruel and harmful way.

Article 38

You never have to be a soldier or take part in armed conflict.

Article 42

All adults and children should know about this convention. You have the right to learn about your rights.

Find out more about the rights of the child, about children's right to complain, and about the global goals at worldschildrensprize.org



Global goals for a better world

The countries of the world have agreed to achieve three extraordinary things for children and adults over the next 15 years: *End extreme poverty. Fight injustice and inequality in the world. Combat climate change.* In all countries, for all people. These are called the UN Global Goals for Sustainable Development. All the goals are equally important, and if we are to have a chance of achieving them, everybody must know about them. Tell everyone you know about the global goals, and join the fight for change!

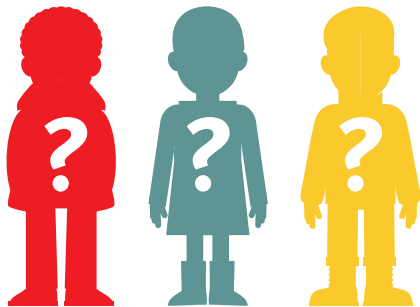
Celebrate the rights of the child

20 November is a day for the children of the world to celebrate. On that day in 1989, the UN adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child.



How are the world's children?

All countries that have ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child have promised to respect the rights of the child. Still, violations of these rights are common in all countries.



NAME AND NATIONALITY

From the day you are born you have the right to have a name and to be registered as a citizen of your home country.

Every year, 140 million children are born. Over 48 million of these children are never registered. There is no documented proof that they exist!



SURVIVE AND GROW

Every country that has promised to respect the rights of the child must do all it can to allow children to survive and develop.

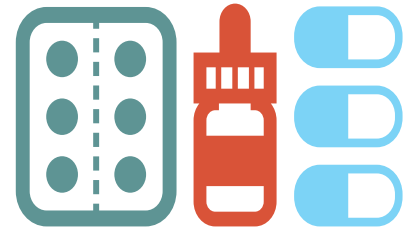
1 in 4 children under five in the world are malnourished, and this affects their development for the rest of their lives. 1 in 23 children (1 in 13 in the poorest countries) dies before reaching the age of five, usually due to causes that could have been prevented such as lung inflammation, diarrhoea and malaria.



FUNCTIONAL VARIATIONS

If you have a functional variation, you have the same rights as everyone else. You have the right to receive support so that you can play an active role in society. Children with functional variations are among the most vulnerable in the world. In many countries they are not allowed to go to school. Many are treated like inferior beings and are kept hidden away.

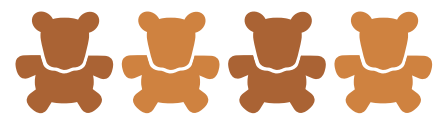
There are approximately 200 million children with functional variations in the world.



HEALTH

You have the right to good health, and to help if you are sick. Lack of food, clean water and good hygiene affects many children's health.

Every day, 16,000 children under five die. Poor children rarely go to the doctor, especially if they are girls. Every year, 2 million children die of common childhood illnesses that can be prevented by vaccination, because 1 child in 6 is not vaccinated. Malaria kills 1,500 children under five every day (approx. 500,000 per year). Only 5 in 10 children with malaria receive treatment, and only 5 in 10 children in the poorest malarial countries sleep under a mosquito net.



CHILD LABOUR

You have the right to be protected from economic exploitation and work that is hazardous to your health or that prevents you from going to school. All work is prohibited for children under twelve.

Around 168 million children around the world currently work, and for most of them, the work they do is harmful to their safety, health, development and education. Some 5.5 million children are forced into the worst forms of child labour, as debt slaves, soldiers or victims of the child sex trade. Every year, 1.2 million children are trafficked, either within their own country or to other countries.



EDUCATION

You have the right to go to school. Primary and secondary schooling should be free for everyone.

More than 9 out of 10 children in the world go to school, but there are still 59 million children who get no education whatsoever. More than half of these are girls.



MINORITIES AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

Children who belong to minority groups or indigenous peoples in their countries have the right to their language, culture and beliefs. Examples of indigenous peoples – the very first people to live in their countries – include Aboriginal Australians and the Sami people of Northern Europe.

Indigenous and minority children often suffer injustices. Some are not allowed to speak their own languages. Many of them are discriminated against, which means that they do not have the same opportunities as other children, for example when it comes to education and medical care.



A GOOD LIFE

You have the right to a home, food, clothing, education, health care and security.

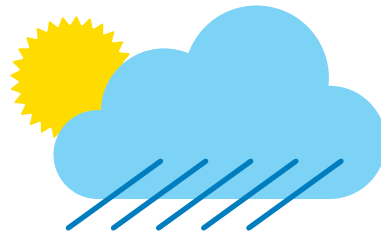
Over 1.3 billion people, or 1 in 7, live in extreme poverty. Almost half of these people are children. Around 100 million children live on the streets. For many, the streets are their only home. Others work and spend their days on the streets, but have families to return to at night.



PUNISHMENT

Children may only be imprisoned as a last resort and for the shortest possible time. No child may be subjected to torture or other cruel treatment. Children who have committed crimes should be given care and help. Children may not be sentenced to life imprisonment or receive the death penalty.

At least 1 million children in the world are being held prisoner. Imprisoned children are often treated badly.



THE ENVIRONMENT

Climate changes are causing more droughts, more floods, heat waves and other problematic weather conditions. Children are killed and injured, but natural disasters can also make food and clean water even more scarce, and can increase the spread of diarrhoea and malaria which affect children particularly badly.

More than half a billion children live in areas that are often affected by floods, and 160 million live in areas where there is a risk of severe drought.



WAR AND REFUGEES

You have the right to protection and care in times of war or if you are a refugee. Children affected by conflict and refugee children have the same rights as other children.

Roughly 30 million children in the world have been forced to leave their homes. Ten million of them are classed as refugees. Over the last 10 years at least 2 million children have been killed in war. 6 million have suffered serious physical injuries, while 10 million children have suffered psychological harm. One million have lost or become separated from their parents. Around 250,000 children are being used in wars as soldiers, carriers or mine clearers. More than 2,000 children are killed or injured by mines every year.



VIOLENCE

You have the right to protection from all forms of violence, neglect, maltreatment and abuse.

1 in 3 children is subjected to bullying. 4 in 5 children in the world between the ages of 2 and 14 are subjected to some sort of physical punishment and/or violence at home. Many countries allow corporal punishment in schools. 53 countries have banned all forms of physical punishment of children.

YOUR VOICE MUST BE HEARD!

You have the right to say what you think about any issue that affects you. Adults should listen to the child's opinion before they make decisions, which must always be in the child's best interests.

Is this how things are in your country and in the world today?
You and the rest of the world's children know best!



The road to democ

What is democracy?

Do you and your friends have similar opinions on some issues but completely different views on other issues? Perhaps you are able to listen to one another and discuss the issue until you reach a solution that everyone accepts. In this case, you are in agreement and have reached a *consensus*. Sometimes you have to agree to disagree. Then the majority – the biggest group – gets to decide. This is called *democracy*.

In a democracy, all people should have equal value and equal rights. Everyone should be able to express their opinions and influence decisions. The opposite of a democracy is a dictatorship. That's when only one or a few people decide everything and nobody is allowed to protest.

In a democracy, everyone should be able to make their voices heard. People have to compromise, and decide things by voting. Direct democracy is when you vote on a particular issue, for example when children decide who should receive the World's Children's Prize. Another example is when a country holds a referendum on a certain issue.

Most democratic countries are governed by *representative democracy*. This is when the citizens choose people to be their *representatives* – politicians – to govern the country according to what the people want.

Every year the World's Children's Prize Program concludes with a democratic Global Vote, organised by you! Come on a journey through time, charting the rise of democracy in our world.



Joint decisions

Throughout the ages people have gathered to make decisions together in a group, tribe or village, perhaps about hunting or agriculture. Some groups have rituals when making joint decisions. Sometimes an object, such as a feather, is passed round, and whoever is holding the feather is allowed to speak.

The birth of the word democracy

In 508 BCE the word democracy is born, from the Greek words *demos* (people) and *kratein* (power or rule). The citizens of Greece have to climb a stair and give their opinion on important issues. If they can't reach an agreement, the people vote on the issue by a show of hands. Only men have the right to vote at this time. Women, slaves and foreigners are not considered citizens and are not allowed to have their say in the decision.

508 BCE



Autocratic rulers

In the 1700s, most countries are ruled by autocratic leaders. In Europe, countries are ruled by kings and emperors, who might ignore the will of the people. But some thinkers are interested in ancient ideas that all people are born free and equal, with rights. They ask why some groups in society should have more power and wealth than others. Some criticise the rulers' oppression and believe that if people have more knowledge they will protest against the injustice in society.



racy



1789

Voice of the rich

1789 is also the year the French Revolution begins. The ideas behind it spread across Europe and influence the development of society. Still, only men are considered citizens. What's more, often the only men who are allowed to vote and become politicians are rich ones who own land and buildings.

No women or slaves

In 1789 the first constitution of the United States of America is written. It states that people should have power over the decisions in society, and that people should have the right to say and think whatever they want. However, the constitution does not apply to women or slaves.



First secret ballot

In 1856 the world's first secret ballot was held in Tasmania, Australia, using ballot papers with the candidates' names printed on them.



1856

1906
1921
1945

Women demand voting rights

In the late 1800s, more and more women demand the right to vote in political elections. In 1906, Finland is the first country in Europe to give women the vote. Sweden and the UK follow suit in 1921. In most of the other countries in Europe, Africa and Asia women are not allowed to vote until 1945, or even later.

1947



World's biggest democracy

In 1947 India liberates itself from the British Empire and becomes the biggest democracy in the world. The fight for freedom is led by Mahatma Gandhi, who believes in resisting oppression without violence.

First democracy in Africa

In 1957 Ghana in West Africa becomes independent from its colonial ruler, Great Britain. Kwame Nkrumah becomes the first leader of the country. The colonisation of Africa, Asia and Latin America began hundreds of years previously. The great powers of Europe sent out soldiers and explorers, to occupy land, steal natural resources, and turn people into slaves.

1957





Equal rights in the USA

In 1955 a woman called Rosa Parks, who is black, refuses to give up her seat on the bus for a white man. Rosa is fined, because in the American South black people do not have the same rights as white people. They are not allowed to go to the same schools as white children, and sometimes they are not allowed to vote. Civil rights champion Martin Luther King starts a boycott of the bus company. This marks the beginning of a protest movement across the USA, against racism and for freedom and equal rights.



The Arab spring

In 2010 a poor young man in Tunisia sets himself on fire when his vegetable cart is confiscated by the police. When news of his death spreads, hundreds of thousands of unhappy people demonstrate against the dictator who rules the country. People in neighbouring countries are inspired, and the dictatorships in Egypt and Libya are overthrown.

1994



Voting rights for everyone in South Africa

In 1994 Nelson Mandela becomes South Africa's first democratically elected president. He has been in prison for 27 years for his fight against the country's racist apartheid system, which separated people according to skin colour. The election of Mandela is the first time that all South Africans are able to participate in an election on equal terms.

2015 Dictatorships remain

Even though more countries than ever before have introduced democracy, people still suffer injustice and oppression. Therefore, world leaders agreed at a UN Summit in 2015 to fight for 17 new global goals for a better, more just world.

2016/2017

The children's democratic Global Vote

In 2017/2018 the World's Children's Prize Program will take place for the seventeenth time. So far, almost 40.6 million children have learned about their rights and democracy – knowledge needed by every new generation. It helps you and your friends to go through life making your country a better place, where democracy is strengthened and children's rights and human rights are respected.

When you have learned all about the rights of the child, and the prize candidates, you are ready for the democratic Global Vote. Your vote is your decision. No one should tell you who to vote for. The candidate who receives the majority of the votes will receive the 2018 World's Children's Prize for the Rights of the Child!



Time for the Global Vote

Through the Global Vote, you can make your voice heard and help decide who will receive the World's Children's Prize for the Rights of the Child.

You have the right to vote until and including the year you turn 18.

Set a date for your Global Vote Day as soon as you start this year's WCP program, so that you have plenty of time, weeks or months, to learn about the nominees and discuss the rights of the child where you live and around the world.

Nobody else should be able to influence your decision – not your friends, teachers, or parents. Nobody should be able to find out who you voted for unless you tell them yourself. Everyone who has a right to vote should be included on the voting register. Every name should be crossed off this list when they receive their ballot paper or when they cast their vote in the ballot box.

Invite people to your day!

Invite your family and friends, the local media and politicians to the Global Vote day!

Make imaginative ballot boxes



Appoint key people

- Presiding officers mark off the names on the electoral register and give out ballot papers.
- Election supervisors make sure everything is done correctly.
- Vote counters count the votes.

Vital voting booth



Make your own voting booth, or borrow one from local adult elections.



Enter the voting booth one at a time, so that nobody else can see how you vote.

Prevent cheating

Prevent people from voting twice by marking everybody who has voted, for example, with ink on their thumb, a painted nail, or a line on the hand or face. Use ink that does not wash off easily!



Count the votes, celebrate, and then report your results for all three candidates to the WCP!



You can find inspiration on pages 18–45, by visiting Global Vote days in different countries.





Through Burma's rain

Fourteen-year-old Naw Klei Tha Paw and her friends have spent several tough days hiking through the rainforest-covered mountains of Burma. The children are from the Karen people, one of Burma's many minority populations.

"We've brought copies of The Globe magazine in our own language, Karen, for our village schools," explains Naw Klei. "Children from several schools and villages will then come together for the Global Vote. The Globe hike is a real adventure!" However, being in the forest also brings back difficult memories...

The world's longest war

Burma, or Myanmar as the country is also known, was a military dictatorship from 1962. Nobel Peace Prize winner and WCP patron Aung San Suu Kyi was held under house arrest. However, in 2015 her National League for Democracy was able to take part in the election, which the party won. Several minority populations in Burma took up arms against the military dictatorship. One of these was the Karen people. There is still a long way to go before Burma becomes a fully functioning democracy, but there is now a ceasefire between the country's government and eight minority populations, including the Karen people. When the ceasefire between the Karen people and the Burmese state was agreed in 2012, the war between them was the world's longest running war. Today, however, the children in the Karen villages no longer need to live in constant fear of war.

When I was six years old, there was a war and there was fighting in the area where I lived. One day, my village was attacked and I was forced to flee into the rainforest with my parents. I cried, and I thought I was going to die. We hid for four days, lying close to the ground beneath trees and bushes. My mum had brought a little rice and salt with her, which we ate, but I was hungry all the time.

When we eventually dared to return to the village, we discovered that many people had been injured or killed. My school had been burnt to the ground.

The war has violated many of our child rights. Children have been killed or have lost their parents, schools have been destroyed and girls who were even younger than me have been abused by adult soldiers.

An important task

Through the World's Children's Prize and The Globe, I've learnt a lot about child rights. For example, that all children have the right to go to school. I didn't know that before. I'm learning a lot by reading about the child rights heroes in The Globe. I'd like to be like them when I'm older. The Globe is excellent, and it felt like an important task to help bring the magazines here to the village, so that



The Globe arrives to the waiting children, after first being shipped across the river bordering Thailand.



forest with The Globe

more children can have the chance to learn about their rights. It's very much needed, as children have many problems here. Many adults don't listen to children's opinions. And many children from poor families don't go to school – they have to work in their families' rice fields instead. They will have tough lives as adults, as they haven't been to school. Things are worst of all for us girls.

Girls' rights

In my family, girls and boys

are treated the same. But it's often the case that families love their sons more than their daughters. Sons are seen to be worth more, and this is made clear in several ways. If the family is poor, it's the daughter who can't go to school. In some villages, girls as young as fourteen are forced to get married. The man pays for his wife, so poor families may sell their daughter to get money. That's wrong. A child is a child. Only adults should get married. People also often talk

disparagingly about girls, saying that we aren't as good as boys, and that makes me sad and angry. In *The Globe*, we learn that girls and boys have equal value. If we can learn about our rights, I believe that we will grow into adults who treat their children better than today's adults do.

A journey of adventure

The hike with *The Globe* magazines was an exciting adventure, and it took three days. My friends and I walked

through the rainforest, climbed mountains, waded across streams and travelled on riverboats. Sometimes we stopped and rested, chatted and played. At night, we slept at the houses of the people in the villages we passed.

In the future, I'd like to become a teacher and teach children about important things. Then, I would certainly use *The Globe* in my teaching! 🌐



Up through the rainforest...



...and across rivers.





Catching food with a catapult

"I always carry my catapult with me, and try to shoot small birds, rats and squirrels when I'm in the forest. I put the creatures I catch in my bag. When I get home, my mum fries the rats and squirrels in oil and makes soup from the birds. We eat them with rice, and they're delicious! I haven't caught anything on this hike yet, but maybe I'll have better luck later on!"

"Through the World's Children's Prize, I've learnt that all children have the right to go to school. I didn't know that before. Here, there are many children who don't go to school because their families are poor and can't afford it. My dream is to become a doctor."

Saw Htoe Kay Wah, 12



We hiked with The Globe!



"The hiking wasn't hard at all, as we live up in the mountains and we're used to hiking and climbing!" says Naw Klei Tha Paw.



Houses on stilts

"At night, we slept at the houses of the people in the villages we passed," says Naw Klei Tha Paw. "The houses are on stilts, and are often made from bamboo with grass roofs. We slept on straw mats that we rolled out on the bamboo floor."



War: the biggest problem

"The biggest problem children have experienced here is being forced to flee because of the war. And we still can't travel freely, as there isn't peace everywhere yet. You can tell that this is true, as certain children still aren't back at school. My dream is to become a teacher one day."

Naw Dah Ku Paw, 13

A lack of medicines and medical care

"Not all the children in our villages go to school, but I think the biggest problem for us is the lack of good medicines and medical care if we become ill. My dream is to become a doctor, because there's a real need for them."

Saw Naw Lay Htoo, 14



Mustn't be used as soldiers

"I think the most important right a child has is to be able to go to school. It's also important that children aren't used as soldiers. When I grow up, my dream is to be able to protect the people."

Saw Tai Kler Htoo, 14



Need to know about child rights

"The World's Children's Prize is important here, as children in the villages don't know about their rights. The only way things can be better in future is if we know about our rights. My dream is to become a paediatrician. If we fall ill there are no paediatric specialists here, so that's why I want to become one."

Naw Thay Lor Paw, 12

The same value as adults

"Through the World's Children's Prize, I've learnt that children have an intrinsic value. Adults mustn't mistreat us, or treat us as if we were worth less. My dream is to become a teacher, ideally in our Karen language, so that all the children here will know their native language."

Naw Htoo Lu Paw, 13





Global Vote by the river

The time has come for the Global Vote in the small Karen village among the mountains. Children from 18 schools have come together to vote. The children decide that the voting should take place down on the shore of the emerald green river.



Wants to become a teacher
 "It's through The Globe that I've learnt about child rights," explains Naw Klei Tha Paw. "Now I teach other children about the World's Children's Prize, child rights and democracy."

Knowledge of child rights
 "It feels great taking part in the Global Vote!" says Naw Klei Tha Paw. "Preparing for the vote is a good way of learning about child rights."



TEXT: ANDREAS LÖNN PHOTO: JOHAN BERKE



Time to drop votes into the ballot box.

Saw Kaw's child rights list

Saw Kaw Wai Baws has drawn up a list of the violations of child rights that children in the villages have suffered during the war:

1. It is not only soldiers who are killed in war, but also many children.
2. Children are forced to leave school and run away from their homes.
3. Homes and schools are destroyed.
4. Displaced children don't have food. Some of them become so malnourished that they die.
5. Children don't get the medical care they need.
6. Children and parents are separated when they are forced to flee.
7. Children become orphans when adults die.
8. Children are injured or killed when they step on land mines.
9. In war, many children are used as soldiers.

"I was happy today when I took part in the Global Vote," says Saw Kaw Wai Baw. "It was exciting being part of something so important. Burma has been a dictatorship where you couldn't vote or have your say. Now, things are finally a little different here. As young people who have been involved in the World's Children's Prize, we now know what democracy is. And what a free and fair election is."



There are thousands of land mines left in the ground in Burma.



After the Global Vote, a few boys have gathered in front of a stilt house to play takraw, a team sport similar to volleyball in which you use your feet, knees, chest or head to get the ball over the net.



The takraw ball is often made of rattan or plastic.

War: the worst crime against children

"This morning, all the children took part in the Global Vote here in the village. I think it's important that we youngsters learn about our rights through the World's Children's Prize, since many children have difficult lives and their rights are violated. The biggest violation against children here has been the long war. When I was eight, my village was attacked and I was forced to flee into the forest. It was the middle of the night, and I could hear the sounds of guns and bombs. I was alone. I feared for my life, and I ran for all I was worth. It wasn't until the second day that I found my parents again. We hid in the forest for two weeks. We thought that the army would find us, and we would be killed. When we returned to the village, the houses had been burnt down and the school had been destroyed.

"Things are calmer now, as there's a ceasefire. I don't know if there will be real peace, but I certainly hope so. I dream of being able to live in peace in a small village. Having freedom. My dream is to become a doctor and to help the people here."

Saw Kaw Wai Baw, 16



The line to vote winds along the river.



Knowledge of Child Rights

"It feels really good to vote in the Global Vote! Preparing for the vote is a good way to learn about child rights," says Naw Klei Tha Paw.



The Karen children know how a democratic vote functions. Even when Burma was a military dictatorship, they cast their Global Votes.



All voters put their fingerprint next to their name on the voter registry.

Fight for children with functional variations!

"Today, I took part in the Global Vote. The World's Children's Prize helps us to learn about our rights. When we worked with the WCP at school I learnt lots of things that I didn't know before, such as that children with functional variations have the same rights as other children. That's not the case in our villages. Here, people look down on those children. Even their own parents look down on them. They often don't go to school, and they don't get to play with the other children. I think it's terrible, and now I also know that it's a violation of the child's rights.

"I know a seven-year-old boy in a neighbouring village. He can't walk, and he

either has to crawl along or lie down. He doesn't go to school, and he doesn't play with the other children. But I'm his friend and we usually talk to each other. We both enjoy it.

"When I'm older, I want to help children with various functional variations to be able to go to school. I've been really inspired by a former WCP prize-winner called Manuel. He's blind, and he fights for blind children's rights in Guinea-Bissau in Africa. I want to be like him."

Saw Eh Ta Taw, 14



Find out more about child rights hero Manuel Rodrigues at www.worldschildrensprize.org



Have children's rights as a subject in school



"I learnt about the rights of the child thanks to the WCP program. Thanks to WCP and the club I am now aware of all my rights. I want children's rights to be included as a subject in school.

"My parents are very happy that I am participating in the WCP program activities.

"Long live children's rights!"

Frédéric, 14, Collège Municipale de Tanghin Barrage



Samira reads out loud from *The Globe* to the WCP Child Rights Club in Tanghin Barrage. All the club members have learned about their rights through the WCP program. They meet regularly and discuss what rights are not being respected.

WCP in Burkina Faso

More and more children and young people in Burkina Faso are joining WCP Child Rights Clubs.

"I am really happy to be a member of the WCP club. It helped me get to know about my rights," says Ariane.

Education for girls

"I am a boy, but I fight for education for girls and for them to get to stay in school. I also want to show how girls who work in the households of others suffer. Some girls are subjected to abuse by their employers. If they break a glass, the cost of it is deducted from their wages, which are already very low. They are carrying out tough work without getting a single day to rest. They wash the dishes, wash clothes, prepare food, take the children to school. After having read *The Globe* I know that their rights are being violated. Here in Burkina Faso we have a telephone number, 116, for children to call free of charge if they are victims of violence."

Pascal, 16, Collège Sainte Collette



Putting an end to ignorance

"After having worked on the WCP program I learnt that there are people who work for the rights of the child. I also learnt about the history and rules of democracy. I don't like dictatorships. When I grow up I intend to set up an organisation that supports and protects children. Together we are fighting for the rights of the child. One day the world will be a better place because of our fight and together we will put an end to ignorance.

"Children, children, fight, fight for your rights.

"In the end, light will rush into this very dark world."

Samira, 14, Collège Municipale de Tanghin Barrage

Ask children before making decisions

"I am very glad about reading *The Globe*. I belong to a WCP Child Rights Club. We discuss with our parents and neighbours about the rights of the child because they are not familiar with them and sometimes they are unaware. My guardian was very surprised to hear me talking about the rights of the child. She was surprised to learn that children have the right to express what they think and give their opinion in all



matters that concern them. Here we make decisions without asking the child. That must stop.

"I was shy, but thanks to the WCP program I now dare to express myself in front of other children and adults. *The Globe* has changed my life a lot, as the magazine allows me to travel to the other side of the world without actually going anywhere. Long live WCP!"

Eugénie, 13, Lycée Municipale de Nongrmassom

Combat discrimination

"Here, corporal punishment is only banned in schools, but not in families. I dislike exploitation of children and especially the ways some parents discriminate against their children. For example, they love one and hate the other, and yet they are both their children. Through the WCP program I have learnt that this

is not normal or respectful of children's rights. So combat all discrimination against children."

Alison, 14, Collège Protestant de Ouagadougou





Time for the Global Vote, prepared by the WCP Child Rights Club.



Follow your conscience and reject corruption

"I like the Child Rights Club. I will fight against forced child marriage because I was upset to read about it in *The Globe*. I also vow to advocate children's right to go to school.

"I am proud of taking part in WCP's activities. WCP teaches us to be democratic and not be a dictator. After I turn 18, I will no longer be able to participate in WCP activities, but then I will be entitled to vote in municipal and presidential elections. I will be a good voter and vote according to my conscience. I will reject the corruption to sell my vote.

"The WCP program prepares us for life now and in the future.

"I love the WCP program! Long live children's rights."

Ines, 15, Collège Municipale de Tanghin Barrage

Stop violating the rights of orphans

"Some host families here call orphans *kiiba*. They subject them to bullying and steal their belongings. Some are even given a new religion and a new name. The child is forced against their will to become Muslim or Christian. Often these children have no birth certificate. They must perform all the household chores. If they make the tiniest mistake, they are severely beaten and deprived of food. When I read *The Globe*, I realised that this is not normal, but is violating the rights of orphans. So I urge Burkina's government to introduce clear respect for the rights of the child. I have made up my mind to become a champion for the rights of orphans."

Philomène, 13, Collège Protestant de Ouagadougou



Vowing to fight

"The *Globe* has made me aware of those who are involved in spreading knowledge about the rights of the child and I vow to fight against violations of our rights. We discuss the rights of the child in my family. In town I saw girls who are victims of the child sex trade. I want to discuss it at our press conference and urge the government to put an end to it."

Nadege, 15, Collège Municipale de Tanghin Barrage

Listen to children

"I am really happy to be a member of the WCP club. It helped me find out about my rights. At first my mother didn't want me to be a member of the club. But shortly afterwards she realised the importance of knowledge about the rights of the child.

"I didn't know that children have the right to express their opinion. Now I have learnt that we cannot force a child to be quiet or to speak. It is very important to listen to the child to know what he or she thinks. I intend to start more clubs, so that WCP can reach more people."

Ariane, 13



Translating *The Globe* for my aunt

"When I was four years old, my aunt took me with her to Ouagadougou, so I became a stranger to my brothers and sisters. When I read *The Globe* I was happy, but sad inside when I realised that my aunt had violated my right to stay with my parents. Even though my aunt is very fond of me, I was sad and wanted to see my parents in the village.

"When I read *The Globe*, I realised that children need, and have a right, to be with their parents. I said to my aunt that a child who is separated from

their parents can have behaviour problems. Children need to be with their parents and receive love and affection. That was when she realised how aware I was about the issue. Now my aunt is curious about *The Globe* and often asks me to translate it for her. She likes it a lot and the whole family has been inspired by the magazine.

"The *Globe* inspires me to become a changemaker, championing respect for the rights of the child."

Asseta, 14, Collège Prive le Messager



Many children in Burkina Faso are grateful for *The Globe* magazine, as they have learnt that they have rights by reading it.



Members of the school's WCP Child Rights Club with the ballot boxes.



The child rights boat is on its way

Martha, Bercky, Ebude and Keranso are heading for the small fishing village of Kange, on an island in Cameroon. They're singing at the tops of their voices to drown out the noise of the boat's engine.

"We are World's Children's Prize Child Rights Ambassadors," explains 15-year-old Bercky. "We travel to poor and isolated places to teach children about their rights, which they wouldn't know about otherwise."



Girls count, too!

As ambassadors, we travel around explaining about child rights and that everyone – even girls – has the right to go to school. We often use The Globe's story about the former prize-winner Malala, the girl from Pakistan who fights for girls' rights. It works very well for us, as things are similar here in Cameroon. Here, too, girls don't count. Poor pupils can sometimes be isolated at school. They might feel inferior and be afraid to speak out or answer questions. If you're also a girl and poor, things are even worse. We tell girls and their families that girls are worth just as much as boys, and are entitled to have their voices heard. We can actually see that things are slowly but steadily changing for the better thanks to our work. Girls are starting to count and to be treated with respect in areas



where we've been. My dream is to be a nurse in my own hospital for poor people, and to help people for free.

Ebude, 15, WCP Child Rights Ambassador, Koel Bilingual Institute, Tiko

Wanted to start school

I come from a poor home. Only my mum is still alive, and she sells vegetables at the market. When I was little I went to school, but I had to leave so I could help my mum at the market. One day, a girl called Enanga came up to me and asked why I worked instead of going to school. When I explained that we couldn't afford it, she said that children who couldn't afford the fees went to her school for free. She said that every child has the right to go to school, to give them the brightest possible future. Children shouldn't work. I thought it sounded too good to be true, but it turned out that Enanga was right. I was able to start school straight away, and that's where I learnt that Enanga is a WCP Child Rights Ambassador. I knew immediately that I also wanted to become a Child Rights Ambassador, and to teach children about child rights and help others just as I myself had been helped. I've been a WCP ambassador for three years now. My dream is to own a school where poor children can go for free. Somewhere where they'll get a chance in life.

Martha, 15, WCP Child Rights Ambassador, Koel Bilingual Institute, Tiko





Boys should help!

There are many violations of child rights here. Many poor children can't afford to go to school. Some of them work by cleaning cars and taxi motor-bikes, while others work at the rubber factory, collect scrap iron which they then sell, fish or work in agriculture. It's important that we, the Child Rights Ambassadors, explain that every child has the right to go to school. Children shouldn't work! Here, it's also common for poor parents to force their daughters to marry while they're still children. The man who marries the girl pays a dowry to her parents. They sell girls as if they were goods. That's not right. A girl should go to school so she can have a good life. So she can get a job, support herself and live her dream, instead of just looking after her husband and the home. Here, girls do nearly all the household chores, like cleaning, cooking, washing-up and laundry. They almost never have any time to meet their friends or do homework. That's wrong! As boys, it's important that we help out at home so the girls have more time to themselves. That way, things will be fairer. My dream is to become an engineer and build factories where people can get a job, since there are so many unemployed people here.

Keranso, 15, WCP Child Rights Ambassador, Koel Bilingual Institute, Tiko



"Kange is in an isolated location on an island," says WCP Child Rights Ambassador Ebude. "Neither children nor adults have been given information about child rights, so we want to help with that."



Poor people have the same rights

I've been a WCP Child Rights Ambassador for three years now, and I really enjoy it. We travel to poor and remote villages, where the rain often comes into the children's schools. There's no secondary school in the fishing village of Kange. The

nearest one is a long way away, and many parents can't afford to send their children there. Nine out of ten secondary age children work instead of going to school. The boys fish and the girls prepare, smoke and sell the fish at the market. It's child labour. It's hard for the children in villages like Kange to get health care. But poor children have the same rights as other children. That's why it's so important that we inform both adults and children about child rights. I believe the situation can then be even better for children in the future. My dream is to be a WCP prize-winner one day for my work fighting for children. *Bercky, 15, WCP Child Rights Ambassador, Koel Bilingual Institute, Tiko*



"We hope that our work in Kange will lead to an improvement in children's situations," says WCP Child Rights Ambassador Keranso. "We want child rights to be respected, and for parents to let their children go to school as a matter of course."

Fisher Felix meets Child Rights Ambassadors



Felix and his uncle Tope mend the nets before returning to the sea to go fishing in the evening.

"I get up at two o'clock every morning and head out onto the sea to fish," says 16-year-old Felix. "This isn't how I imagined my life. My dream is to train to become a doctor. But there's no one who can pay for my school uniform, fees or books. This is the only way for me and my three sisters to survive."

But Felix has dared to start dreaming again for the first time in a long while. The WCP Child Rights Ambassadors have inspired a little hope in him and in other children who are forced to work in the fishing village of Kange.

I've been fishing for two years now. Before that, I had a good life. I had enough to eat, I went to school and I played football with my friends. My dad was a fisherman, and my mum sold what he caught at the market. My sisters also went to school. Those were good times. But everything changed when my dad became sick and died. I was fourteen years old at the time, and I still miss him a lot.

After my dad died, I was

forced to leave school and start fishing instead. I didn't have a choice. How else would we cope, and how else could my sisters carry on going to school? My plan was to complete my schooling and then train to become a doctor. But that all came to nothing. And yet, things didn't feel completely hopeless. My dad didn't leave me completely empty-handed. I had his boat, so I would be able to look after my family.

An unpleasant sensation

A year later, when I was out at sea fishing, I suddenly had an unpleasant sensation. Something felt wrong. I became increasingly anxious,



"I still dream of becoming a doctor. The planned evening school could be a step along the way. If you don't have an education, you have a tougher life," says Felix.

and when I came ashore I found out that my mum had died. She was pregnant, and had suddenly had to deliver her child long before it was due. The neighbours had helped her to get to the hospital, but she had died immediately after giving birth. The child only lived for a few minutes.

I was inconsolable. It was so incredibly hard, and I couldn't see the sense of anything. But my grandmother looked after me. And I didn't have a choice. I was responsible for my sisters. After three weeks of grieving, I went back out to sea and fished again.

My sisters and I live with my grandmother and my uncle's family. Because I'm working, my sisters can go to school and we're not alone.





→ But I often think that my life would probably have been completely different if my mum and dad were still alive.

Child Rights Ambassadors

One day, the Child Rights Ambassadors from the World's Children's Prize and some of their teachers started coming here to Kange. They talked about child rights and showed us the magazine *The Globe*, which contains stories about children's situations around the world. The ambassadors explained that all children have the right to go to school, and that children shouldn't work. I agree completely, and I liked what I heard. I told the ambassadors

that I love going to school and that I had different plans for my life, but that I didn't really have any choice other than to work during the day.

Eventually, the Child Rights Ambassadors and their teachers suggested that an evening school might work for the children and young people who fish. And that would be fantastic! Now, the plan is that the evening school will begin as soon as next term.

It's great that the WCP ambassadors are here explaining about child rights, as many children have been forced to work instead of going to school. And there are many parents who don't think it's important for children to go to school. They don't think it's a good idea, as their children will work as fishermen anyway. These parents need to know that it's a child's right to go to school. They need to understand that forcing children to work is a violation of child rights. It's only when adults have learnt this that life can improve for children here.

Achieving dreams

Going to school is important, as you can achieve your dreams if you have an education. You can't become a doctor without going to school. You can't become a lawyer without going to school. With an education, you can do important things for society. And if you don't have an education, you'll have a tougher life. Even if you're a skilled fisherman, life will be extremely hard when you grow old – when you're not as strong as you once were, and can no longer go out to sea every day. What will you and your family eat then?

I still dream of becoming a doctor. The planned evening school could be a step along the way! 🌐



Sisters at school

"I use the money I earn from fishing to pay the school fees for my sisters, Margrate, Good Luck and Madam," explains Felix. "I think it's particularly important for girls to go to school, as things are harder for them here. If a poor family has several children, it's the daughters who can't go to school. Sometimes the family decides that a child won't go to school at all, since someone needs to look after the house. In that case, it's always a daughter!"

Evening school in Kange

The WCP Child Rights Ambassadors who visit Kange attend Koel Bilingual Institute in the town of Tiko, which is run by the organisation Kosa. This is Kosa's plan for the children in the fishing village:

- Pay school fees for orphans.
- Open an evening school for children like Felix who have to work during the day. The evening school will give pupils the knowledge needed to carry out further studies at other schools.





Support from grandmother

In Kange, children often live in large families. Even though Felix's parents are dead, he isn't alone and abandoned.

"My grandmother often supports me," says Felix. Here, they are sitting and talking in Felix's room.



New-found courage

"The Child Rights Ambassadors have explained to me about the World's Children's Prize, and I've learnt a lot about child rights," says Felix. "Those of us who have been involved have all become more courageous. Now we're keen to speak up and demand our rights!"



Felix's day: From the sea to the Global Vote



02:00
I wake up.



14:15
It's time to eat fufu (cassava porridge), rice, bread, butter and soft drinks that we've bought from women who come down to the beach.

06:30
I have my breakfast on the boat. Bread, fish and tea.

02:15–14:00
I'm out at sea, fishing with my uncle. There are around 50 boats from the village out fishing at the same time.



14:00
I give the catch to my aunt for smoking. The fish will be sold at the market, and to buyers who sell it a long way away. Everyone helps to drag the boats ashore.

14:30
Every other week, we need to repair broken fishing nets or make new ones. Then I have a bit of time to hang out with my friends. Sometimes we go to a café and watch a film, but usually we play football. My favourite player is Messi, and I support Chelsea.



15:00
Today, I also took part in the Global Vote. It felt like I was supporting the candidate in their work for children! Lots of boys and girls here in Kange who have been forced to work took part in the village's Global Vote.

16:00–18:00
I'm out at sea, fishing again.



22:00
Time for bed!



Global Vote in Kange

"Before the Global Vote, we – the Child Rights Ambassadors – taught the children in Kange about their rights. We used the magazine *The Globe*. I think it's important that we have the WCP programme in places like Kange, as it's a good way to learn about child rights," says Martha, 15, from Koel Bilingual Institute in Tiko.



Child Rights Ambassadors saved Joy

I lived with my mum and dad in Nigeria, and I didn't go to school as we were too poor. One day, a woman came on a visit from Cameroon and promised my parents that she could help me to start school here.

When I came here to Cameroon, things were nothing like the woman had promised. I didn't get to start school. She said that I had to sell food on the street instead. I wanted to run away, but I couldn't. I didn't have any money, I didn't know anyone here and I was only eight.

I worked for the woman for two years, from early morning through to the evening. I didn't get paid. She only gave me somewhere to live and a little food.

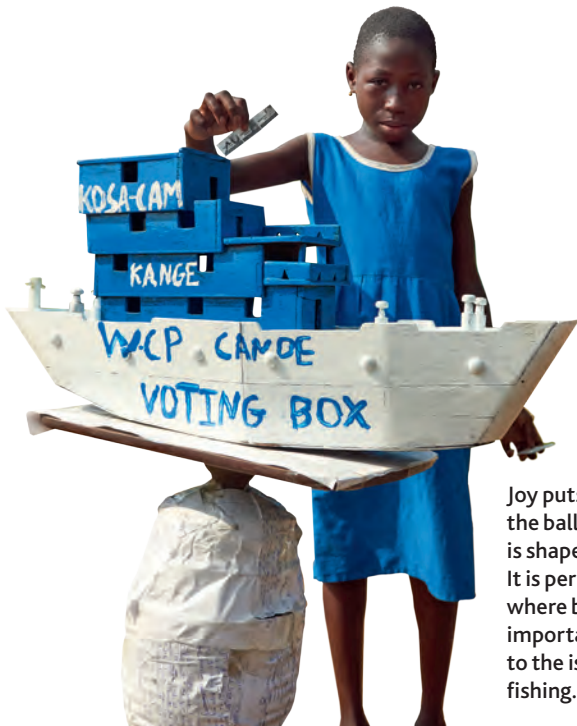
One day, the Child Rights Ambassadors from the World's Children's Prize came by where I was working. They promised to help me to go to school instead. Together with their teacher, they talked to the woman and

made sure I was able to leave her. Then they paid my fees and I was finally able to start school.

Samuel, the teacher, helped my dad to come here. At first, my dad was very sad. He thought that the woman had been looking after me well all along. But when he saw that I had a good life now, we decided that I should stay here and that my big brother should come here to look after me.

Today, it's the Global Vote in our village. It's very exciting. The people we can vote for are people who do good things for children. I like the candidates, and I wish they were here as there are many children in the village who have a tough life.

In the future, I'd like to become president and let all the children go to school for free." Joy, 10, *Government Bilingual Primary School, Kange*



Joy puts her vote in the ballot box, which is shaped like a boat. It is perfect in Kange, where boats are so important for getting to the island and fishing.



All eligible voters in the Global Vote receive voting cards as identification. Here is Joy's card.





Election observers make sure that only one person goes into the voting booth at a time to mark their vote on the ballot. Everyone's right to a secret vote must be respected.

Girls are married off

Here, girls of my age are sometimes forced to marry adults – and that's wrong. Then, they have to leave school and look after their husband and their new home instead. That's wrong, because all children have the right to go to school. If girls are married off so young, they can never be free.

Today, I was a supervisor and checked that the voting was car-

ried out correctly. This is an important day for us children.
Mirabel, 12, Government Bilingual Primary School, Kange



Equal value

When I was a baby, I had a serious case of meningitis. I couldn't see, and when I grew older I couldn't walk, dress myself, learn to write or go to school. I didn't feel I had the same value as other children. Eventually, I received care and the right medicines, and I'm

now doing much better. I'm in the first grade at school, and it feels good. I can see, and I can write.

I'm very pleased that we've worked with the World's Children's Prize in our village. The Child Rights Ambassadors explained that all children have equal value, including those with functional variations. That made me happy. In the future, I want to be a nurse."

Naomi, 13, Government Bilingual Primary School, Kange



Wants to become a lawyer

I'm happy today, because the Global Vote is a good thing. It's a day when we celebrate child rights. Before voting, we read *The Globe* in class and

the WCP Child Rights Ambassadors taught us more about our rights. This is important, as child rights aren't respected here. Many parents hit their children, which isn't right. And many children don't go to school. That's why it's so important that we have the World's Children's Prize here, which teaches everyone to respect children. I dream of becoming a child rights lawyer and being able to help my family.

Sunday, 14, Saint Faithful Nursery and Primary School, Kange



Sunday, at right, has just left the voting booth and is headed to the ballot box with his ballot.





Global Vote theatre at Brilliant Future Academy on the right of children to health care.

Counting votes after the Global Vote.

Wants Global Vote in all Nigerian schools

"If I became President of Nigeria today, I would establish a Ministry of Children's Affairs and make sure that all child rights are respected and protected. I would also make sure to pass a law that would make The Global Vote compulsory in all Nigerian schools."

Mary, 10, Western Hall College, who was elected the new chairperson of the WCP Child Rights Clubs in Nigeria



Other children share my story

"The World's Children's Prize Programme helped me to understand that my story is not the only sad story in the world. WCP has helped me to see my story in the context of other children's stories from various countries. I was abused emotionally, physically and sexually in a children's home by the son of the woman who ran the home, and I also experienced child labour torture. However, the children's rights articles have helped me know my rights, even though I'm still looking forward to justice in my case. The Globe also teaches me about democracy and good leadership skills. As a Child Rights Ambassador, I will continue to fight for children's rights in Sierra Leone!"

Isata, 16, Annie Walsh Memorial School



Rights of the Child in the school curriculum

"The Globe magazine really broadens my knowledge about how we children have rights that must be respected and promoted. Our teachers never taught us this in school. I have started the advocacy process in my school through the WCP Child Rights Club to reach out to our government about the need to include child rights in the school curriculum."

Oso, 14, Western Hall College



Democracy is the right to vote without fighting

"I feel so proud and valued when I cast my democratic vote for the first time for the World's Children's Prize in the Sierra Leone Vote. I now understand what democracy is all about: having the right to a choice without fighting, as it used to be here in Sierra Leone."

Jariatu, 15, Our Lady of Guadalupe Secondary School



I love The Globe

"Oh I love The Globe magazine with a deep passion, like my Bible. The magazine teaches me love, caring, and service to humanity."

Benjamin, 11, Western Hall College



Global Vote at Brilliant Future Academy.

Discussing The Globe by grandmother's fire

"I read the entire Globe Magazine. I like gathering the kids in the afternoon and telling the stories in The Globe to them by the fire, which my grandmother makes.

My mother is poor, so I have always gone to public school. But there are lots of teacher strikes and sometimes there is no school for an entire academic year. So mum has now enrolled me in a private school.

If I had money, I would build a home to welcome and educate vulnerable children, talibé children who wander around barefoot and keep to themselves.

The WCP initiative deserves praise, because it made it possible for us to know our rights."

Midan, 14, Professor Cândido School



I want all children to be change-makers

"Thanks to the World's Children's Prize I have learnt so much. Before working with the WCP, I didn't have a clue about my rights. But now I know my rights and what people can and cannot do to me. I have also learnt to stand up for my rights and I dare to speak up when I know that something is wrong. I have learnt that even we children can make a difference.

It's amazing that so many children work with the WCP programme in different parts of the world, because there are so many children that need to learn about their rights.

I hope that all children want to be change-makers, because there are things in this world that need changing and it's the responsibility of everyone – adults and children alike – to make sure this happens. We need to work together for change to happen."

Linnea, 13, Snättringe School, Huddinge



Global Vote in Linnea's school, Snättringe School in Huddinge.

Linnea at the lectern during the WCP Ceremony.



See Linnea and her classmates sing at the WCP Ceremony at worldschildrensprize.org/songforchildren

Children all over the world make their voices heard

"I am happy and honoured to participate in the WCP programme. This platform has embraced and united children from all over the world to raise their voices against child abuse, exploitation and trafficking. I am trying to pass on my knowledge about child rights issues that I have gained from this programme to my schoolmates and to society in order to spread awareness about child rights. Without a doubt, this programme has filled me with motivation and determination to work to improve respect for child rights in Nepal. I will definitely form a child rights club and together, we will address issues of child rights violations and spread knowledge of equality and respect for children in my school. I promise that I will neither violate any rights of children, nor will I cease to raise my voice against child rights violations in any setting."

Neeta, 13, WCP Child Rights Ambassador, Maiti Nepal's Teresa Academy



REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO



Child Rights Ambassadors carry out the WCP programme

"Since training to become a Child Rights Ambassador, we students have carried out the WCP programme, even though we still consider ourselves apprentice teachers. WCP has helped me discover and understand child rights. I view the world as a better place today, now that I can demand my rights."

Sara, 16, Le Rosier School

The Globe came with my rights

"My first encounter with my rights was when The Globe magazine came to our school. We learned about our rights. Becoming a Child Rights Ambassador has given me the courage to inform other kids in our school about their rights. I wish I had known about my rights when I was six years old and my uncle forced me to sleep outside for a month."

Tendekaj, 16, Mutoko



ZIMBABWE

WCP CUP!

The first winners of the WCP Cup in netball, which is similar to basketball, and football were crowned in Zimbabwe. Eight teams from four cities participated. The children came from resettlement areas notable for many violations of child rights, such as child marriages, child sex trafficking and lack of access to education and hospitals. The media and decision-makers visited the WCP Cup and the day concluded with a match between the girls and boys.

We are fighting for girls' rights!

Friends Dimentilià and Rafico are WCP Child Rights Ambassadors and are fighting together under the project *Mozambique for Girls' Rights*.

"When we do this together, boys and girls, we are showing that we see one another as equals. I feel ashamed when I see how boys and men treat girls and infringe their rights," says Rafico.

We have no voice!

"My maths teacher thought that boys were smarter than girls. He put the boys in one half of the classroom and us girls in the other. Then he turned his back on us and only taught the boys. He only did calculations on the blackboard on the boys' side. We didn't say anything, and when the teacher asked if everyone had understood, we girls had to answer that we hadn't understood anything. For him, this was proof that we were unintelligent just because we were girls. That is discrimination!

"Here in Mozambique, women and girls have no voice. We don't count. At home, it is the sons and fathers who have the power. Daughters are even forced to get married despite the fact that they are only children. In school, teachers listen more to boys than girls."

Being a child rights ambassador

"When I got the chance to become a WCP Child Rights Ambassador I learnt a lot about the rights of both children and girls. Now I know that boys and girls have the same rights. We are equals. But because girls' rights are not respected we have to fight for them! That is why I am involved in Mozambique for Girls' Rights.

"There are eleven child rights ambassadors in our group, informing people about the rights of children and girls. We talk to pupils and staff in schools and attend village meetings where we explain to parents, traditional leaders, priests, imams and all other adults how important it is to respect girls. Every week we talk on the radio about child marriage, sexual violence

and male teachers who exploit girls in exchange for good grades."

Home visits

"We also seek out children who do not attend school. The families are poor and the children are forced to work. It is often the girls who do not get to go to school. We inform them about girls' rights and that everyone has the right to go to school. We tell traditional leaders so that they can help the families. And we make the authorities aware of children who are not going to school and who are being mistreated.

Informing people about girls' rights is important in order to make life better for us girls. As child rights ambassadors we are already seeing that our work is making a difference. My maths teacher and others have stopped discriminating against female pupils and treat everyone with respect!"

Dimentilià, 17, Inharrime

Girls' rights on the radio

"We WCP Child Rights Ambassadors make a radio programme about girls' rights. We broadcast at three o'clock every Friday on Rádio Comunitária de Inharrime. We can reach many people by radio," says Rafico.



I feel ashamed!

"All boys in Mozambique know girls who have their rights violated. And I do too. In a village where my relatives live, a 15-year-old girl was forced to marry because her parents wanted 30,000 meticaais (USD 500) as 'lobola' (an African custom in which the bridegroom's family makes a payment to the bride's family). Many parents do not show respect for girls' rights or their freedom. As soon as the girl is married, she is dependent on someone else and has no freedom to control her life. Girls, just like us boys, must get to go to school and gain knowledge and create their own lives.

"In many families girls have to work much harder than boys. They are forced to do all the household chores, while boys can play and do their homework properly. It's not fair! For me, it's natural to help at home. I do cleaning, prepare food, wash the dishes and wash clothes, so that my sisters can also have free time and manage to do their homework."

Can be a role model

"As a boy, I feel ashamed when I see how boys and men treat women and girls and infringe their rights. I have long wanted to do something about this, but didn't know what to do. However, last year I got my chance. The girls, who are WCP Child Rights Ambassadors at my school, welcomed us boys to be part of Mozambique for Girls' Rights. I read The Globen magazine and the ambassadors taught me about the rights of children and girls.

"It is important that we boys get involved and fight for girls' rights. As a boy, I can be a role model for other boys and get them to respect girls, so that they are good to their daughters and wives in the future. The whole of Mozambique will be better then! That is why our work of spreading knowledge about girls' rights is so important."

Rafico, 17, Inharrime

Home visits

"When we visited Adélia and her four grandchildren she told us that the family couldn't afford school uniforms. We explained how she can get hold of the right documents and support in order to register the children in school," says Dimentiliã.



Attending village meetings

"At village meetings we explain to parents, children, traditional leaders, priests, imams and others about the UN's Convention on the Rights of the Child and the fact that girls should be respected," says Rafico.

It's about fairness

For Rafico, it's a matter of course to help with the household chores at home.

"Girls are subjected to a lot of wrongs and that is something I want to change.

I want to get boys to respect girls.

It's about fairness!" says Rafico.



Global Vote Day

WCP Child Rights Ambassadors Dimentilià and Rafico had spent a long time preparing for Global Vote Day at the 4th of October Secondary School in Inharrime, Mozambique.



Dimentilià votes for child rights.

"We had our Global Vote today," explains Dimentilià. "As Child Rights Ambassadors, we had previously informed all the pupils and teachers about child rights and the World's Children's Prize.

"The Global Vote is important to me. It changes us when we read about how the candidates fight for children. We learn, we are inspired, and we want to be like the candidates!"

Fighting together

"We are Child Rights Ambassadors – girls and boys

who fight together for girls' rights," continues Dimentilià. "Because girls are in a weaker position and boys prefer to listen to other boys, it's important that we have ambassadors like Rafico who can reach out to boys. Because if young guys don't change their attitudes, things won't change for us girls either."

New knowledge

"I love reading books and newspapers," she continues. "The Globe magazine has taught me a lot about child rights that I didn't know about before. In the future I'd like to be a lawyer and fight for justice – not just for girls, but for everyone!"



Supporting heroes

"During the Global Vote, I kept the queue in order and I was also vice president for the vote," says Rafico. "The Global Vote was fun and it felt important, as I got the chance to support my hero!"

No voter fraud

Everyone who votes is given a mark on their finger to prevent them from voting twice.



Adults talk about Mozambique for Girls' Rights:



"The WCP Child Rights Ambassadors at the school have

informed me about Mozambique for Girls' Rights. The aim is to put an end to all exploitation of girls, and for girls' rights to be respected everywhere. It's a very impor-

tant issue, as girls' rights are extensively violated here. Not so long ago, one of my pupils was forced to leave school by her father, because he had decided that she should get married. Unfortunately that's common in Mozambique. Here, parents don't attach any importance to their daughters attend-

ing school. The only thing that can stop this is educating people about girls' rights. That's why this programme is so important!"

José Herculano, head teacher of the 4th of October Secondary School, Inharrime

"At schools where the WCP programme has been introduced, you can see that the problem of male teachers taking advantage of girls in exchange for pass grades has been dramatically reduced or eliminated completely.





"I make cars out of steel wire and sell them for 100 meticaes (USD 1.50)," says Abdul, 10. "Mine are much nicer, so I can sell them for 250!" teases his big brother Junior, 13.



All children have rights!

A neighbour who knows Junior and Abdul knew that I work with child rights and asked me to come and visit their brothers' family. When I visited them, I explained that all children have the right to go to school. I also told them who to contact to get all the necessary documents in order. I will personally contact the senior manager responsible for schools in the area, to be really sure that everything is working properly. The brothers

will now be registered so that they can start school as soon as the next term begins. I think that all children, even those who don't go to school, have the right to learn about their rights and to have their voices heard. That's why I explained to Junior and Abdul about the World's Children's Prize program and invited them to take part in our Global Vote. *Nilza, 17*



"Today, Abdul and I took part in the Global Vote," says Junior. "We voted for someone who fights for children who have tough lives. I'm glad we were able to vote even though we don't go to school."

"Nilza, a WCP ambassador, came and told us about child rights," says Junior. "She said that all children have the right to go to school. My dream is to become a traffic policeman." "And mine is to become a doctor," adds Abdul.



That shows just how important Mozambique for Girls' Rights is! We reach a lot of people within the church through our services and assemblies, so we have a great responsibility to spread information about girls' rights." *Abel Hovie, church leader, Inharrime*

"I was trained together with the WCP Child Rights Ambassadors. The aim is to inform society about girls' rights so that girls can have a better life. And there's a real need for this. We don't value girls, and that's not good. As well as girls doing all the work at home and often being forced to leave

school early because of child marriage, they're also exposed to a lot of sexual violence. Within their families, by teachers at school and in society at large. We have laws that forbid all this, but they need to be used! We therefore need to keep informing people about girls' rights in society. That's why this

programme is so important. As a traditional leader, I will protect girls, ensure that the law is complied with and make sure people change their views by providing information." *Hermenegildo Ananias, traditional leader, Boane*





Wants to fight for girls

We had the Global Vote today at our school, and it feels good that I've learnt so much by being involved in the World's Children's Prize. The WCP Child Rights Ambassadors came and told us about child rights and about the Global Vote, and about girls' rights in particular. I've also read a lot in *The Globe*. It inspires me so much! I also want to become someone who fights for child rights, just like the child rights heroes. I want to fight for girls' rights and put an end to child marriage. Child marriage is common in Mozambique, because of poverty. Families force their daughters to get married for the dowry, the *lobola*, and to earn money. The *lobola* might be a cow plus a sum of money that the man pays for the girl. Girls are sold as if they were bread or some other kind of goods. Child marriage violates a girl's rights in many ways. The girl's father forces her to marry an adult man, which is an absolute violation. The girl is then forced to leave school so she can look after the man's house instead. She will also have children, despite only being a child herself.

My dream for the future is to become a pilot.

Carlos, 15, 4th of October Secondary School, Inharrime, Mozambique

Child Rights Ambassadors gave me courage

Today, I took part in the Global Vote. Here, child rights are also violated. By reading about the work of the child rights heroes in *The Globe*, we learn more about our own problems.

Lots of girls leave my school early because their families force them to get married. Girls attend year eight, but after that they don't go to school any more. That's so wrong! What can a mother who hasn't completed school teach her children in the future? It's not only her children's lives that are being ruined, but also her own life. Even a girl is born with dreams. When you force a girl to get married, you destroy her dreams. That's a crime.

We can talk about the things we learn through the World's Children's Prize at home with our families and our neighbours. Gradually, the situation will improve for girls.

The WCP Child Rights Ambassadors came to our school and gave us information. I was so fired up! I also want to become a Child Rights Ambassador who fights for girls' rights. They've given me the courage to talk about important things. It's important for us girls to see brave Child Rights Ambassadors who make their voices heard.

In the future, I want to be a teacher.

Juvial, 15, 4th of October Secondary School, Inharrime, Mozambique



WCP program gave me courage

"In four years of being a part of the WCP program, it helped me to stand up for my rights and also the rights of other children. I've been a victim of most sorts of violence done by my dad. At first I was scared because due to the fact that he is my father and as what God said "Honour thy mother and father" I didn't do anything. But as the years went by I was being rational and thought that it isn't right. I was able to stand up for my right and my father was given punishment. This courage of mine was because of the WCP program. I may broadcast both wisdom of the rights and what the children can do. Thus I have a greater impact towards society and can make a change, all because of the WCP program."

Henry, 17, Negros Oriental High School



Every child should use The Globe

"I initiated the WCP Club at our school. I've been able to teach the different rights of children. It makes a difference in my life. We can find amazing and touching, true-to-life stories of all the rights of children in The Globe. Reading this magazine touches our hearts. It makes us travel around the world and meet children's different lives. I can see children not going to school but working as farmers or fishermen here in our community. We must know that every child needs to go to school. The WCP program empowers every child to stand for what is right. I want to be a teacher and I'll make sure that every child will go to school and use The Globe. I will teach them the rights of the child."

Francis, 16, Jose Marie Locsin Memorial High School



Anti-corporal punishment drawing

"This is the first time I've taken part in the World's Children's Prize program. My drawing shows a child facing corporal punishment from his parents because he chose to go to school instead of searching for wood. The practice I get as a member of the WCP Child Rights Club at my school makes it easy for me to discuss issues relating to children's rights and democracy with my friends and teachers."

Isaac, 12, L'École Joie et Vie



Makes my voice heard

"I was lucky enough to join the WCP Club at my school, and this means I can talk about children's rights with my schoolfriends. My drawing shows a child who is making his voice heard by putting his ballot in the ballot box. I voted for children's rights. I've only ever seen adults voting in Benin, my country, before."

Édouard, 12, L'École Joie et Vie



Proud of my knowledge of children's rights

"Taking part in the WCP program was a fantastic experience. I've never experienced as many emotions as when I learnt about all the work the candidates had done. I'm proud of what I know about my rights, and I'm going to share this knowledge with my brothers and friends."

Mirlande, 12, CS les Elus



The biggest school in the world votes

City Montessori School in India, the biggest school in the world, was involved with the WCP program as usual.

"Casting my vote makes me feel empowered. I feel important, because my vote counts."

Sanridhi, 14



Global Vote at Genesis NP School in Uganda.

No corporal punishment at school!

Myra, 17, has been a WCP Child Rights Ambassador since 2013. Through her experience of fighting for child rights at schools, she has now become a programme administrator for the organisation FORDESK. Here, Myra is interviewed by the UN radio station Radio Okapi.

Myra: Our aim is to teach children and teachers about child rights and about the democratic process.

Radio Okapi: Some people say that your training makes children disrespectful when they demand their rights.

Myra: That's because those people don't understand. We're therefore continuing with our training so that they can understand and change their views of children. It's good for them to learn a better way of meeting children's needs. Children don't become unpleasant because of our training, but they do learn to take responsibility for their future and that's something every culture needs. The teachers should be the first ones to teach children about their rights.

Radio Okapi: You talked about banning corporal punishment. In Africa, and particularly in DR Congo, do you think it's good to ban corporal punishment in schools?

Myra: We insist that corporal punishment should not be permitted in schools. Even the government of DR Congo has banned it. It goes against child rights, and it doesn't change a child. On the contrary, it results in children suffering both physically and mentally instead of improving. That's why Child Rights Ambassadors, teachers and clubs must work together to find a solution to every situation where children are involved and have problems.

Radio Okapi: If you reject corporal punishment, what do you think is the best way to teach a child?

Myra: Every decision that is taken about a child must be for the child's benefit. Corporal punishment is literally a physical and mental breaking down of the child. Teaching a child involves making decisions and taking actions that benefit the child. There are many different ways of doing this. The best way is to talk to the child like a person.

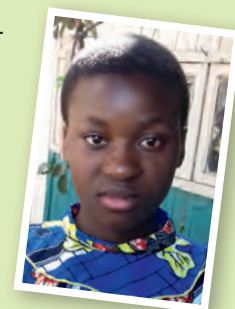
Radio Okapi: What do you mean by an ambassador?

Myra: A Child Rights Ambassador is a child who has experienced violations of their rights and who demands that these violations should not continue to affect other children. The violations must stop, and those who commit the violations must be held accountable for their bad habits. The ambassadors work with clubs and teachers, and review the child rights situation at schools. WCP clubs monitor the situation on a daily basis. They have discussions with the WCP Child Rights Ambassadors before speaking with the school's management.

Song for The Globe

"I love The Globe! It has great stories about children like me, from all over the world. By reading it, I learn about other children's struggles around the world to promote and protect their rights. I thereby discover our heroes who defend child rights in difficult situations. The Globe has taught me that child rights must be protected by children themselves and by adults. I fight for my rights to be recognised and respected within my family and my village, by boys and by the authorities. How can I live far away from explosions, from war and from discrimination? The Globe, please answer me! I must compose a song so that I never forget you!"

*Emily, 12, E.P.
Mbinga School*



Wants WCP at all schools

"Since discovering the World's Children's Prize program, I've dreamt about paradise on earth: the experience of all the child rights I read about in The Globe being respected! The WCP program teaches me a lot about child rights (for boys or girls, rich or poor, black or white, refugees, orphans, disabled children, those who live in cities or villages, etc.). The WCP program has taught me to vote: I look forward to becoming an adult and defending democracy in my country! For the rest of my life, I will remain an ambassador for girls' rights to put an end to the violence against girls in my country, DR Congo!

"I love the WCP program! I like reading The Globe for the global mobilisation of children and adults to protect the rights of children in the world!"

"Yes to the WCP program in all schools in DR Congo, in both the city and the countryside."

*Mali, 14, Institute
Matimanyi*





Black hair to fight discrimination

"There are seven of us children in our family. Two of us girls are albinos. We are discriminated against because of our skin colour. My big sister Justine, who is also albino, was abused by a soldier for being albino. We have white hair, but because of the discrimination I colour it black so that other children will come to my house. I'm sad that I can't go to school like my sisters and brothers, who are black. Thank you to the WCP program and the first article of the Convention on the Rights of the Child about all children having the same rights. I'm at home on my own all the time. I will fight for all children. The Globe is like my baby, and I always have it with me!"

Katungu, 13



Poor and rich have the same rights

"I've taken part in the training on child rights with great interest. At our school, there is discrimination between children from rich families and children from poor families. The teachers sit the children from rich families in the rows with good chairs, and the children from poor families in the rows with bad chairs. The training has given me the strength to fight against discrimination, and from now on I will tell the teachers that rich and poor children should sit on the same chairs."

Joyce, 13, Complexe Scolaire Elimu



TOGO

Global Vote at CS le Sinou School.

Read The Globe every day

"You, child, take your courage in both hands. Learn more about your rights. To do this, read The Globe magazine every day. Make your voice heard because decisions that concern you must take your interests into account."

Elisée, 10, CS le Leader



WCP stops teachers using their whips

"In my country, teachers often use their whips. The WCP program will stop them using their sticks. And now I am proud of The Globe magazine since I discovered it."

Yayira, 11, CS le Leader

The authorities should read The Globe

"In my country the authorities are not acting to promote the rights of the child. They have to get The Globe magazine. That would help them a lot."

Junior, 10, CS le Leader



WCP is changing many things

"At high school we are taught the rights of the child. And curiously, teachers often do not respect these rights. With the WCP program many things are already changing."

Blessing, 15, CEG Agoe-Centre

Proud to belong to the WCP Club

"This year I learned to stand in front of a large crowd to speak and defend the rights of the child. I am proud to belong to my school's WCP Club."

Prisca, 10, CS le Sinou



Thank you, WCP – now I can demand my rights



"I'm the only girl in our family, and my grandmother who looks after us expects me to do all the household chores. I was late for school every morning. And she came to collect me from my classroom during breaktime at 11 so that I could go home and make lunch. Every day was the same. Thank you, WCP, for giving me the opportunity to demand my rights. I can now go to school regularly and I only have to make dinner on Sundays as I go to lessons on Saturdays."

Binta, 15, Toufndé Gandé school

WCP – my visa to stop me being married off



"WCP is my Freedom and my visa, helping me to avoid being married off. When I told my family and village about WCP, my mum told my dad to let me carry on going to school and growing up, not to marry me off. WCP helped me to regain my right to time off, protection and education."

Houlimata, 13, Toufndé Gandé school

Global Vote in the village of Toufndé Gandé.





The Globe for all children!

"The World's Children's Prize is a great programme that teaches us about our rights. As a Muslim girl, the programme has helped me a lot since I came into contact with it, and it helped other girls in school as well. I'm a WCP Child Rights Ambassador at my school, and I teach the members of our WCP Child Rights Club – most of whom are girls – about our rights. The Globe is an interesting magazine, and I recommend that all children in all schools in Ghana should have their own copies, especially in rural areas where the rights of children and girls aren't respected."

Barikisu, 15, Gomoa Buduburam Junior High School

Helping my friend thanks to WCP

"I'm really pleased the WCP program is here to stay, because it teaches us a lot. I have a close friend who's facing a major challenge, and I'm trying to help her by giving her advice with the help of the things we learn at the WCP Child Rights Club. My friend's dad died when she was fourteen. When her mum remarried, they moved in with her stepdad. Her mum looked after her well initially, but then her stepdad wanted to force her to give up school and marry her off. I was able to give my friend advice on her rights, so she still goes to school. She sells ice water during the holidays to make a living. Thank you, WCP program, for providing advice and strength to all us children who face challenges."

Priscilla, 16, Sekondi School for the Deaf



Teaching village parents

"I'm a Child Rights Ambassador, so I can teach our parents to respect the rights of the children in my village, especially the girls' right to an education." *Nématou, 12, WCP Child Rights Ambassador, Jeannotkro-school*



Global Vote at Jeannotkro-school.

Children can battle for rights

"When I read The Globe, I discovered that we children can fight for our rights to be respected. I've also seen how children all over the world have fallen victim to violation of their rights."

Juliana, 10, WCP Child Rights Ambassador, Sokoura school



Child rights are being infringed in our village

"The World's Children's Prize program has helped me to achieve a better understanding of the rights of children and their importance for the development of children. So I decided to become a child rights ambassador because I see so many children suffering as a result of their rights being infringed in our community."

Aristide, 12, WCP Child Rights Ambassador, Sokoura school



Global Vote at Sokoura school.





As a Child Rights Ambassador, I give children a voice

"I'm a World's Children's Prize Child Rights Ambassador. I teach schoolchildren and members of the community about children's rights, especially the rights of girls. I give a voice to children, because nobody listens to children in the communities we live in."

Children are afraid to speak up. As a Child Rights Ambassador, I visit other schools to talk to the children and teachers. One of these visits was to the BOSASA Centre for boys behind bars.

Learn from my story

"BOSASA is for young people who have been in trouble with the law. In other words, it's a prison for children. Initially, we went there to attend the Global Vote Day.

"The boys miss their mothers and struggle to break away from their drug addictions. When they reach the age of 18, they're sent to adult prisons even if their crimes were committed when they were children. I told them about girls' rights and asked them to speak to their peers and become ambassadors for girls' rights while they're in prison.

"This changed the way I think about children's rights. I couldn't believe what those boys told us. One boy, who was 16 like me, told us his story and asked us to retell it wherever we could so that others could learn from his life.

"I was a member of the Nice Time Kids gang in my neighbourhood. I grew up with gangsters. My dad's a gangster. All the tattoos on my body represent something I've done for the gang. So when you get a gun and you shoot somebody, you get a tattoo. When we receive The Globe magazine, we see lots of information about how adults harm children. I'm in prison now, but the adults in the gang are at home. They sent me to commit the crimes, and now I'm paying for it."

Sam, 15, Chris Hani School



Global Vote for the boys behind bars at BOSASA.

Teach all children about their rights



"The Globe helped me to discover that children's rights aren't respected in my country. Children, and girls in particular, are exploited. Children are being denied their right to good education, access to health care and lots more. Most importantly, I was able to learn what my rights are. Let all children go to school and learn about their rights."

Sidibé, 16



WCP, the true school

"WCP is the true school that makes it possible for children to fight for their own rights. WCP is great at teaching us how we should go about achieving our aims in future by showing us that we have rights that must be respected."

Lounceny, 17

WCP and a modern world



"The World's Children's Prize program is very important in my country and my school, where the rights of pupils aren't respected. WCP has taught us all about our rights. I thought girls had to do all the housework until WCP helped me to understand that we need to help our sisters and mothers. The most important thing is to persuade parents to read The Globe and understand that they have to allow girls to be responsible for their own lives, as we live in a modern world."

Henoc, 17



The Globe makes me strong

"Reading The Globe makes me feel strong and secure. It teaches me things I didn't know. It's made me want to help my friends and make them understand that we have lots of rights that aren't being respected. And that we have to fight for those rights. The Globe has taught me that all the world's children have the same rights. WCP is a programme that allows children's voices to be heard."

M'mah, 16

Nominated Child Rights Hero

Gabriel Antonio Mejía Montoya

PAGES
46–65

WHY HAS GABRIEL BEEN NOMINATED?

Gabriel Antonio Mejía Montoya, Father Gabriel, has been nominated for the World's Children's Prize for his more than 30-year struggle for Colombia's vulnerable children – street children, child soldiers and children sentenced to prison.

Father Gabriel has dedicated his life to helping the poor. He has faced several attempts on his life as a result of his work.

During a war in Colombia that has lasted more than 60 years, almost six million people have been forced to flee their homes and over 200,000 have been killed. Children have been severely affected.

When, at the age of 37, Gabriel saw the street children living outside his home he founded the Hogares Claret foundation and its first centre for street children. Today, the foundation runs 52 children's centres. They care for 4,000 children and young people who have lived as street children or child soldiers, as well as children serving their sentences in the foundation's detention centres for young people. The efforts of Gabriel and Hogares Claret have improved the lives of tens of thousands of children.

Father Gabriel fights for children that society has turned its back on. He says love is the most important medicine. Doctors, psychologists and social workers live together with the children. They listen to the children and take part in their daily activities. The children are offered education and therapy. They have yoga sessions and meditate every day. The therapy at Hogares Claret includes all children and young people joining the Scouts. They learn good values, to show empathy, be fair, not to judge others and to show respect and take responsibility.



The Child Rights Hero Gabriel with children at Hogares Claret in Medellín.

Father Gabriel, as he is known, has worked all his life for the poor and for street children, child soldiers and children sentenced to prison. This work can be dangerous in Colombia, and he has faced several attempts on his life. He once had to escape on horseback in the middle of the night when his house was surrounded by armed men ...

Helping others is something that Gabriel grew up with as it was in his mother's nature. She always wanted to help people and care for those that needed help.

Gabriel loved going to church when he was little and knew by the age of seven that he wanted to become a priest. When he travelled to the capital Bogotá at the age of 13 to train for the priesthood it was against the wishes of his parents, and they didn't think he would stick with it. But his parents were wrong.

Helping the poor

At the age of 27, Gabriel was ordered to travel to the Vatican in Rome, Italy, to work with the leaders of the Claretian order. The Claretians are made up of thousands of Catholic priests working to help the poor in over 60 countries around the world.

After returning to Colombia, Gabriel was placed in one of Colombia's poorest and most inaccessible regions, Chocó, on the Pacific coast. His task there was to help the area's poor people.

Gabriel loved the people

he met in Chocó, which was home to indigenous peoples and black Colombians. People whose rights had been abused for hundreds of years and who had almost nothing.

"It was an important mission for me. Claretians are required to call attention to and condemn injustices. We see hungry, unemployed and people who are discriminated against and we suffer with them. You feel their pain," explains Gabriel.

When Gabriel left Chocó nine years later he had helped give the area's residents something that had

never existed in these impenetrable wetlands and jungle. With the help of Gabriel and the Claretians, three small transport planes were purchased for the area. Three runways were built, along with 30 clinics and several schools, and lots of children were vaccinated against diseases.

Wanted to kill Gabriel

When Gabriel and his colleagues helped Chocó's poor farmers to form a cooperative, this angered lots of businessmen. The cooperative allowed the farmers to sell their produce themselves at larger markets outside Chocó and receive more money for their goods. This was how the businessmen used to earn their money.

Late one night there was a knock at Gabriel's door. It was one of the farmers from the cooperative. He told Gabriel to get dressed and get out of there quickly.

Gabriel saddled his horse and rode through the night away from his house. He was far away by the time the house was surrounded by several men with rifles. They set the house on fire and riddled it with hundreds of rounds of bullets. The businessmen had taken out a contract to have him killed.

On another occasion, Gabriel and a colleague were travelling by plane over Chocó when the engine suddenly caught fire, forcing them to make an emergency landing. When the pilot inspected the engine he found it had been sabotaged. The intention had been for the plane to explode in mid-air.

House for street children

By the time Father Gabriel, as he is known as a priest, arrives in Medellín he is 37. There's a group of street children living outside his front door in the centre of the city.

"I was working lots and



Gabriel is loved by the former street children of Hogares Claret in the capital Bogotá. He likes to sing and dance with them.

always had a lot to do but I had a bed, a room and food. Meanwhile, there were children sleeping on the street who had nothing."

Gabriel is an outgoing and positive person. He talks to everyone. He gets to know the street children. Gives them food, blankets and clothes. When they're unwell he takes them to the doctor.

It's now that he has the idea of a foundation that will have a reception centre for street children. The foundation would be named Hogares Claret (Claret Homes) after the founder of the order of the Claretians.

Gabriel and a French

priest buy a building in Medellín. They open it up for street children. Together with the children, they renovate the building and create Hogares Claret's first reception centre.

It's a simple idea: Doctors, psychologists and social workers would live together with the children and take part in their daily activities. The children are offered schooling and therapy. The families of those children who are not orphans are invited to get involved.

Work with no pay

Soon Gabriel has a waiting list of 150 children and young

people who want to come to the reception centre. On Sundays, families, neighbours and people associated with the Claretians are invited to the centre. Together they collect food, soap, shampoo, paper, clothes, towels and other items. For the first six years, no one working at the centre is paid.

"My approach has always been that the society that creates the problems should pay for the solution. We live in a society in which the only thing that matters is owning things at the expense of others. These children are the victims of that. We teach them the opposite. We talk



Gabriel with boys who were sentenced to serve their prison sentence at Hogares Claret. This includes joining the Scouts and having horse therapy.



Gabriel is received with hugs at Hogares Claret in Medellin. He takes the time to talk to all the children he meets and shows that he cares and likes them.

“At our juvenile detention centres, young people dream about the future. I hope at some point to completely change detention centres for young criminals,” says Gabriel.

about good values, about showing sympathy, being fair, not judging others and showing respect and taking responsibility. It’s strictly forbidden to abuse the children or punish them by beating or using other physical forms of punishment,” says Gabriel.

Gabriel is soon able to open new centres in Medellin, but also in other towns and cities. Colombia’s social services turn to him for help. The war in the country and the trade in cocaine mean that the number of children with problems involving drugs and criminality has increased significantly.

Scouts and meditation

Gabriel’s centre is popular and successful. Hogares

Claret becomes a member of the Colombian Scout movement and all the children that come to the foundation’s centre become Scouts.

Gabriel works far too much. On one of his trips, he learns yoga and meditation. He feels it helps and from that day he does a session of yoga and meditates a few times a day. These activities are also introduced at Hogares Claret.

“The first time I meditated, my stress just disappeared and I felt so much calmer. Some of the children we meet also suffer from great stress, lots of aggression and violence. I thought if it helped me it should help them. Now both meditation and the Scout movement are part of the peaceful societies that

we’re creating together with the children.”

Dreaming about the future

Colombia’s social services now pay Hogares Claret to operate reception centres, not just for street children. They also run juvenile detention centres, centres for former child soldiers and support young people who have been through their programme and want to go to university.

Many of the people and youth leaders that work at the foundation’s various centres once attended Hogares Claret as children. One of them initially tried to kill Gabriel. Because just as Gabriel once angered businessmen in Chocó, in the city suburbs he came into conflict with lots of

criminal gangs.

“We were due to visit a woman with two children who were drug abusers. Suddenly this boy appeared with a gun. He shot at us and drove off in a car. He later came and found me and asked for forgiveness. He now works for me.”

Gabriel has also been shot at because drug dealers feel he has taken away the gang’s best drug dealers.

“One of this country’s greatest failings is its prisons. They lock people up and give them no hope for the future. At our juvenile detention centres, young people dream about the future. I hope at some point to completely change detention centres for young criminals,” says Gabriel. 🌐

Gabriel learnt yoga and meditation on one of his trips. He felt that it helped with stress and, since then, all children at Hogares Claret centres practice yoga and meditation every day.





Kevin, pictured centre, listens to Gabriel during his visit to the Hogares Claret centre in Medellin.

From the street to the Scouts

When Kevin arrived at Hogares Claret he had lived almost all his life on the street. He survived by scavenging rubbish and selling things that could be recycled. He took drugs and often got into fights.

Once, when he had no money, he went to a church. The priest said he couldn't help him. But a woman overheard Kevin and gave him money if he promised to go to the police, which he did. The police took him to Hogares Claret in Medellin.

"At first I just wanted to get out of here. It was weird that we all had to be Scouts and follow loads of rules, but after a few weeks I thought it was alright. We get to learn lots of stuff that might be useful later in life," says Kevin.

Life in the Scouts has helped Kevin sort his life out. For the first time, he can now contemplate a future. He wants to learn to bake, but what he really wants is to be a professional footballer.

Helping each other

Ten years ago, Kevin and his big brother were living alone in a village in the countryside. Their parents were dead.

"We stole to survive. But one day the guerrilla fighter in charge of our village came to our house. They said stealing wasn't allowed and killed my big brother right in front of me."

Since then, Kevin has been on his own. For the first time in his life, the Scout patrol at Hogares Claret gives him peers and friends who respect him. They help each other.

As Scouts they learn to take responsibility, become good leaders and show sympathy. They see themselves in a new light and become aware of what they can do by themselves and with the help of others.

Father Gabriel was in the Scouts as a child. He regards the Scout movement's methods as part of the therapy that helps the children and young people who come to Hogares Claret. 🌐



Kevin sporting a new haircut. A guy who used to be at Hogares Claret and got help there comes once a week to give haircuts to anyone who wants one, and to teach hairdressing to those who are interested.



Swapping guns for horses

A few months ago, Eider, age 15, was living with a gun in his hand. He was part of a gang in Medellin that was threatening people and carrying out contract killings. He's now standing defenceless in front of a horse and he's scared.

As part of the therapy at Hogares Claret, children work with horses. Eider has ridden a horse once before, but now he has to give the horse a hug and get it to lie down.

"They kick pretty hard, I reckon. What do I do?" Eider asks the others.

A lad who has done it before shows him how. He gently lifts a hoof and the horse lies down. He lies down on the horse's stomach and they lie there motionless.

Eider shakes his head and laughs a little. Then he tries to get close to the horse. The horse isn't interested, tries to get away, snorts and pulls on the reins.

Hugging horses

After a while, Eider manages to get close up to the horse.

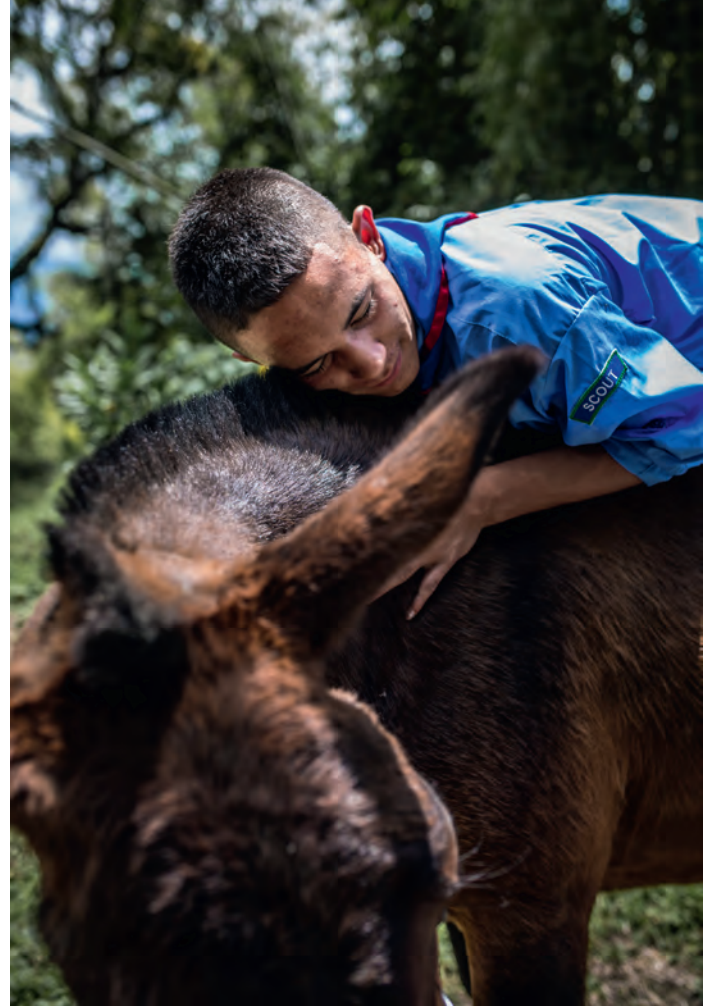
He feels the warmth of the animal and strokes its soft, short coat. He hugs the horse without the animal reacting. It feels nice. They stand there for a while.

With the help of the other lad, Eider eventually gets the horse to lie down. He tries lying on the horse. But the animal soon wants to get up again.

"That was scary, but it gave me a bit of confidence. It felt like we made contact a bit. The horse wanted to help so I relaxed. And that made the horse relax," says Eider.

Like family

Hogares Claret uses horse therapy mainly as a way of helping young people who have had problems with their family. The horse is regarded as a family member. It doesn't



Eider was a gang member with a gun. Now he's lying on the ground hugging a horse as part of his therapy at Hogares Claret.

answer questions. It listens and helps. Getting close to the horses and working together with them helps the young people deal with relationship problems with their parents.

The idea of horse therapy came to Father Gabriel when he met up with a good friend who was working with horse

therapy in Spain. Hogares Claret now rears horses at a number of locations in Colombia. As well as the therapy with the animals, the young people are also involved in rearing the horses, caring for them, feeding and cleaning them, as well as exercising them. 🌐



Hogares Claret youth centre La Libertad outside Medellin uses horse therapy as one of many ways to help young people heal and improve their self-esteem.



Bullets whistle through the air. The soldiers are shouting and Marlon's friends run for it. He doesn't know if he's killed a soldier. It's probably safest to run, he thinks. Then he thinks again. If he surrenders, then the war's over as far as he's concerned. He's got nothing to lose.

Tricked into becoming a child soldier

One day, two men come knocking on Marlon's door. His mum isn't home. She works at a mine out in the countryside. Marlon's younger sisters Sofia and Rosanna are at school.

"Are you Marlon?" ask the men.

"Yes," says Marlon.

"We've heard you're looking for a job. You want to help your mum and earn a bit of money, right?" say the men.

"That's right," replies Marlon.

The men say they have a job for him.

"You'll get two dollars now and then more later, OK?" ask the men.

Marlon hesitates. Two dollars will buy 1.5 kilos of rice. That's a lot of food.

"You'll get a weapon too," say the men.

Up in the mountains

Marlon's dad was shot when Marlon was little. His uncle has been in the paramilitary groups: men and women who fought against guerrilla fighters for the government.

Sometimes they helped the military.

No one knows who lives here

Marlon stands at the gate to the centre and looks out. There are no signs showing what's behind the gate: that it's a centre for former child soldiers. This is to guarantee the children's safety.

Marlon has always wished he could also have a weapon. And he wants a motorbike. Just imagine having a job where he got to earn money and carry a weapon. He says yes to the men.

He gets into their car. They drive out of town, out into the countryside and up into the mountains. When they arrive, they are in a military camp, except everyone is wearing different uniforms and carrying different weapons. And it looks like they're hiding. The military doesn't do that.

Marlon soon realises that the men are members of an armed group. Many of the members have been in the paramilitary like Marlon's uncle. Several years ago they were given money by the government to hand in their weapons, but some were drawn back to life in the paramilitary.

The paramilitary say they are protecting people. But if people don't pay for protection, they get beaten up or killed. So really, they are criminals.

Becomes a child soldier

Marlon is given a rifle and a pistol, uniform and boots. The men teach him how to shoot and how to stay undercover in the forest. He gets food and the men say he'll get money later.

After a month, Marlon joins a patrol with six others.



Colombia's child soldiers

In 2016, peace was declared between Colombia's government and the country's biggest guerrilla group. By then they had been at war with one another for more than 60 years. Almost six million people have had to flee their homes in Colombia. More than 200,000 have been killed.

How the war started

The war began because the guerrilla fighters thought the government's policies were unjust. Poor people had no land to grow crops on, or they had jobs that were poorly paid. There was no health care or schooling for everyone.

Then people in other countries started buying cocaine from Colombia. Many Colombians started using weapons to take land and grow coca leaves. The guerrilla fighters did this too.

Lots of rich people in Colombia thought the government wasn't doing enough to combat the guerrilla fighters. So they paid former soldiers, police and criminals to form paramilitary groups. They fought against the guerrilla fighters, but they didn't do what the government told them. The paramilitary forces have been disarmed, but some have turned into criminal gangs.

Ban on child soldiers

Both the guerrilla fighters and paramilitary groups used child soldiers. This is forbidden under international law. It is also a breach of children's rights. No one knows how many children have been soldiers in Colombia, but over the past 16 years the country's social services have taken care of 6,000 child soldiers.

The child soldiers are first placed in a reception centre, where they are given information about their rights. They are given an ID card and can then start school. A few months later they can move on to a protection centre, where they live until they are ready to return home. If they have no family to return to, the children can stay at the centre until they are 18.

Father Gabriel's Hogares Claret runs several reception centres and protection centres for former child soldiers.

They each have a different job to do. Marlon has to carry lots of equipment and heavy weapons.

The patrol is given the job of looking for guerrilla fighters in a particular area. Several weeks later, when they've made camp one evening, the military turn up. Marlon is so tired that he's fallen asleep behind a tree. He wakes to the sound of shooting. His friends are shouting. One of them falls to the ground, dead.

It's the first time Marlon has been involved in a gunfight. He looks round the tree and sees a soldier behind some bushes. He aims and fires. Bullets hit the tree where he's sitting, and Marlon throws himself down on the ground. When he looks up, the soldier he shot at has gone.

Some of Marlon's friends start running away. Marlon's first thought is to run with the others. But then he thinks again. He hasn't earned any money. The men tricked him.

"I surrender," shouts Marlon, throwing down his weapon. He steps out from behind the tree with his hands on his head. The sol-

diers quickly approach him. They can see that he's a child.

"How old are you?" asks a soldier.

"15, sir," replies Marlon.

"You're too young to be a prisoner. You'll have to come with us and we'll call someone who can look after you."

There are two dead people lying on a patch of open ground in the forest. One of them is Marlon's friend. The other is a soldier. Marlon wonders if it's the soldier he shot at.

Father Gabriel's centre

In Colombia it's against the law to be a member of an armed group. If you're an adult, you end up in prison. If you're under 18, you're taken care of by social services.

At the military base, the soldiers take pictures of Marlon. They can't interrogate him, but they ask questions about his family, where he comes from and why he joined the paramilitary group.

The next day, a woman from social services turns up. First of all she asks Marlon if the military have treated him well.

"Yes, they've been kind," says Marlon.

Will there be peace now?



Jesus, 17

"I think that the peace will last. Before I didn't know anyone who had fought with the other groups, but now I have friends who used to be paramilitary. So anything is possible."



Leydi, 17

"Peace talks have never worked in the past. Peace isn't just about an armed group laying down their weapons. You have to solve the problems that caused the war too."



Ingrid, 15

"I hope there will be peace. Without war, we'll all have a chance of a better life, not just in our village but in the whole country."



Luis, 17

"For there to be peace in Colombia, all armed groups need to come to an agreement together. I don't think everyone who's been involved in the fighting should avoid punishment. But I hope there will be peace. That's what we all want."



Dayana, 17

"The problem is that drug smuggling will continue and people want control over it. That's why the war won't end. There will always be people who want cocaine. And as long as people are poor, then poor people will try and demand a better life. For there to be real peace you have to talk about these things too."

Then Marlon has to tell her about his family and where he comes from. The woman says they will contact his family, but because he's a child soldier he needs to be placed at a

reception centre for former child soldiers. At the centre he'll get to see a psychologist, go to school and learn about his rights.

Marlon hopes to go to the centre in Medellin. It's near

home. Instead he has to fly to Cali. The woman at social services says there's a very good centre for child soldiers there.

"It's run by a priest called Gabriel. There are lots of peo-

ple there who are very good at their job. And there are other children like you. If things go well you'll be able to go to another centre later out in the countryside, and you can finish school," says the woman.

Scout without a uniform

The centre is up on a hillside near Cali's more attractive residential areas. There aren't any signs that say it belongs to Hogares Claret. Both boys and girls live here. They all come from different parts of the country. Some of them have been guerrilla fighters. Others have been members of paramilitary groups.

Marlon shares a room with three other lads. Two of them have been guerrilla fighters. Marlon thinks about how just a few weeks ago, they could have been shooting at one another in the forest.

All the young people are separated into Scout patrols. Marlon takes the Scout Oath. But they don't get a uniform. The staff at the centre say they've had enough of uniforms. They've just had uniforms as child soldiers.

The other boys in Marlon's patrol vote for him when they're choosing a leader. There's a morning meeting



The young people at the centre have all been child soldiers in various armed groups. A few months ago, they would have been killing one another. Now they are friends.

Marlon's precious things

Under Marlon's bed there's a plastic box containing all his belongings. There are things like soap, shampoo, deodorant and plastic slippers, but also a notepad and a book.

"I like writing, so sometimes I keep a diary," says Marlon.



every day, and the patrols are given different tasks to solve. Then they meditate. Sometimes they do Tai Chi too. In the afternoons they take the bus to a school a bit further away. Marlon enjoys it.

"I want to be a pilot or one of those policemen who investigate crime scenes," he says.

Scout with uniform

As a former child soldier, Marlon is part of a state programme to help former child soldiers rejoin society. After a couple of months they are sent on to a centre where they live for several years and finish school. Their families can come and visit.

"I'm grateful for the help I get here, but I miss my family. I often feel lonely here."

Exactly where Marlon will end up is decided by the staff at Father Gabriel's Hogares Claret and social services. It might be Medellin, Bogotá or Cali. And everyone wears a uniform at the centres, but not the military's uniform. It's a blue Scout shirt with a neckerchief. 🌐



Balance with Tai Chi

Once a week, Tai Chi is on the timetable. It's a martial art that is also used as therapy in China. Marlon and the others carefully follow the teacher's instructions and movements.

"It's important to have both feet firmly on the ground. They're like tree roots. Without roots, the tree falls," says the teacher.

Just like when they do yoga, their breathing is deep, calm and quiet. Breathing this way helps to control their feelings. They adopt various positions that symbolise people's inner conflicts. The teacher explains that if they keep practising Tai Chi, they will improve their self control and balance.

One day they will be able to do all the movements and adopt all positions in a single flow, without stopping. The teacher shows them. It looks like a beautiful, peaceful dance.



After break, Marlon works in the school's garden, where the former child soldiers are creating a vegetable patch.



Enemies are friends

Marlon was a child soldier in the paramilitary; Jesus was a child soldier with the guerrilla. Today they are roommates and best friends at the Hogares Claret centre for former child soldiers.

Marlon goes to school every afternoon. He can read and write and he's good at counting. Some of the young people who have been guerrilla fighters have hardly been to school at all, so sometimes it can get a bit rowdy in the lessons.

Meditation every day
Meditation is on the timetable every day. Marlon finds it relaxing.



Marlon, 15

- Favourite sport:** Basketball.
- Likes:** Working out.
- Doesn't like:** Being on my own.
- The worst thing that's happened:** When I was left alone by mum.
- The best thing that's happened:** That my family promised to help me.
- About peace in Colombia:** If the guerrilla fighters hand in their weapons, others with weapons will take their place.



Dayana lived on the streets for two years

When Dayana is 12 she runs away from home. She's never liked school. She gets into a lot of fights and she's been kept down for two years.

Dayana grew up with her grandma. The day she decides to leave her, she meets an older girl called Lorena in the square. She offers Dayana marijuana and tells her about a life without school and homework. A life of partying and dancing.

Drawn to the idea of this new life, Dayana moves in with her new friend. Lorena's mum doesn't care what they do. Together the girls sell drugs during the day and then buy their own later. They go to bars and dance. It's fun till the police arrive.

"How old are you?" ask the police.

"17," replies Dayana.

"We don't believe you," say the police, and take her to the police station.

"Where do your parents live?" ask the police.

"I don't have any parents. I'm an orphan," says Dayana.

Runs away again

The police call a social worker, who comes to the station. She decides that Dayana should live with a foster family.

The mum in the new family is not kind. She locks Dayana in, and Dayana regrets lying to the police. But Dayana has run away before, and a week later she sees her chance. She steals money from the foster family and jumps out of a window.

Dayana feels bolder, and

she goes back to Lorena. They decide to steal more money. Dayana has become a thief. She takes more drugs to stop her thinking about it too much. It doesn't make it any easier, but it costs more money.

Dayana is constantly afraid that the police will catch her again. They are observing the girls and one day they storm into Lorena's flat. They shout and hold the girls down on the floor.

Grandma says no

The social worker who looked after Dayana last time comes back. She says that Dayana has to go to school. And that it's illegal and dangerous to sell drugs. But she is also kind and says she's found another family for her.

The new family lives in a nice house. Dayana gets her own room. Her new foster parents take her to a shopping centre. They let her choose what clothes and toys she wants. There are three other children living in the house. They're nice. And the food is great.

Dayana can't leave the house herself, but she can sit outside the front door and sometimes she sees people she knows passing by. They are people she met when she was selling and buying drugs. Then she gets a funny feeling in her stomach. She so wants to be with them and feel the freedom of making her own choices.

The social worker runs some checks and finds out that Dayana isn't an orphan at all. She looks up Dayana's

When Dayana arrives at Hogares Claret's accommodation San Gabriel in Bogotá, the staff can immediately see that she is trouble. She's 14 and has been living on the streets for two years. Her experiences with police and social services are far from positive. But three months later, something's changed. Dayana has a goal. To get to see her grandma again and study to be a lawyer.

mum, who says she wants her daughter to come home. Dayana doesn't want to.

"My mum doesn't want me. She hits me and forces me to look after my younger siblings so she can go out. I'd rather go to my grandma," says Dayana.

The social worker has spo-

ken to Dayana's grandma too.

"She doesn't want you to live with her. She's angry that you ran away and haven't been going to school."

To the capital

Dayana now has to go to a home for street children with drug problems. No one really



Dayana had run away lots of times and spent two years living on the streets when she was arrested by the police and taken to Father Gabriel's Hogares Claret reception centre for street children.

wants to be there, and Dayana decides to run away. This time she wants to go to the capital Bogotá, which is a five-hour bus journey away. A boy has told her about El Bronx, a few districts in central Bogotá that are controlled by criminal gangs.

“You can do what you want

there and there are parties all the time,” says the boy.

During an outing, Dayana throws herself out of the bus and runs. She runs until she can't go any further. She asks some men who drive motorcycle taxis if they can take her to the capital. They laugh.

“It'll cost you, and we're not

driving that way,” they say.

But one of the men says he can help. He gives Dayana a lift to the home of a woman, who says Dayana can live there.

Dayana is happy at first, but then she understands that the woman sells sex. She wants Dayana to do it too. Dayana

gets scared. She remembers when a man threatened her with a knife and raped her. She cries and tells the woman she doesn't want to.

“You can work here cleaning and cooking food instead then,” says the woman.





Dayana, 15

Wants to be: A lawyer to defend children.

Best thing: When we had a family day here and ate nice food, laughed and cried.

Worst thing: When I get sad because I miss my family.

Misses: Being at home with my family.

Doesn't miss: Going out partying and taking drugs.
Favourite music: Reggaeton and rap.

Admires: My grandma and Michelle, who is the coordinator at Hogares Claret.

▶ Wants to forget

Lots of strange men come to the woman's house. Dayana gets free drugs sometimes, but soon she starts missing home. When she calls her grandma, she cries.

"Pack your clothes and I'll come and get you," says Grandma.

Somewhere inside, despite everything, Dayana is happy she never made it to Bogotá. But home at Grandma's, the nagging starts.

"You must go to school. You can't go out. You have to give up drugs."

Dayana thinks about what that boy told her about El

Bronx in Bogotá. She feels that she has to get there. She looks up Lorena and they decide to travel together.

They meet a man at a bar who says he can help them, but that Dayana has to sleep with him. For the first time, she lets a man pay to have sex with her. Dayana feels awful. She doesn't really want to. Afterwards, she and Lorena drink alcohol to forget.

More dangerous life

The girls are in awe of the capital Bogotá. Millions of people live here. Soon Dayana has a boyfriend. They take the bus to the big shop-

ping centres together. There they steal clothes in the shops and mobile phones or bags from customers.

Life in Bogotá is exactly as Dayana had imagined. They do what they want. They wear nice clothes, party, take drugs, drink alcohol and go to discos.

But life is also more dangerous here. One evening when they're at a disco, a gang of young men storms the place with weapons. They beat up several lads. They threaten people with weapons. Each district is controlled by its own gang.

There are also more police



Father Gabriel always listens and talks to all the children. Dayana likes that. She's met lots of adults she trusts at Hogares Claret's reception centre for street children.

The girls in the ring were arrested during a police raid. Now with the help of Hogares Claret's reception centre for street children, they are on their way towards a better life.



in Bogotá. If she wants to buy more drugs and food, Dayana has to steal. She's arrested several times by the police. They take Dayana's money and drugs, but they don't ask her age or call social services.

Assaulted by police

In El Bronx, a few streets away from Bogotá's old centre, gang members hang around on the street corners. If the police turn up, they blow whistles to warn everyone.

When she isn't stealing, Dayana sells drugs. Sometimes she has to sell her body. She's not looking after herself. She soon starts losing

weight. Her rescue comes when she meets a new boy, Rafael. They fall in love and move in together. Together they rob people on the buses and streets in the nicer parts of the city. One day, Dayana steals a mobile from a man outside a shop. She doesn't notice the policeman standing a way off.

"You'll have to come with us to the police station. We need to report this and you're also underage. Don't you have any parents?" asks the policeman.

Dayana acts tough. The police don't like that and they assault her in the police car.

They put handcuffs on her and beat her. When they arrive at the police station, Dayana has a swollen eye and her left wrist is broken.

Major police operation

Dayana is placed in a home for street children. It's terrible there. The staff threaten the children and punish them with ice-cold showers. Dayana is angry and upset. She fights with the other children and with the staff. She gets hit herself.

Dayana is now 14. She's been through this before. Adults who don't listen. Just threaten and punish. The

only thing she can think of to do is to run away. Rafael is out there somewhere. A month later, Dayana sees her chance and returns to Rafael. They borrow money from a gang, buy alcohol and drugs and party all night long.

They don't think about how to pay back the debt. Instead they start stealing again, buying clothes and drugs. Several days later the gang they borrowed money from is waiting for them. There's only one way for children to pay back their debts. They have to collect rubbish. For a whole week, Dayana and Rafael collect rubbish.

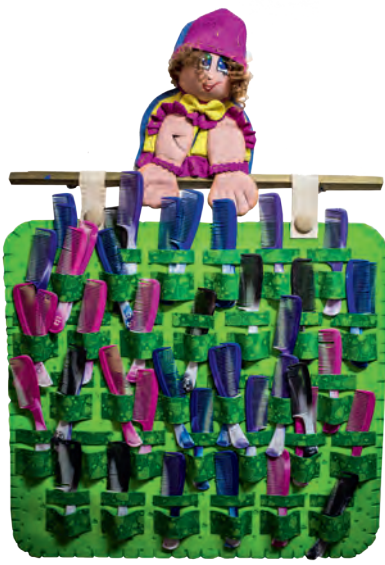
No knives or forks

When food is served at San Gabriel's young people's centre, there are only spoons to eat with. All food is served on the plates at the table. Then the spoons and mugs are handed out. When Dayana and her friends have finished, all the spoons, plates and mugs are counted. Cutlery can be used as a weapon. That's why all the spoons are collected, and only the adult members of staff can have knives and forks.



Dayana lived on the streets in this area of the capital Bogotá.





A different hairstyle every day

Every day, Dayana has a new hairstyle. All the other girls at San Gabriel have the same hairstyle too. The girls' combs hang in little cases on the walls. Every morning, a friend combs through Dayana's hair and puts it up in the style for the day. Then Dayana combs her friend's hair. They do this to keep their hair clean and avoid lice. These are the hairstyles for each weekday:



Monday – braid.



Tuesday – bun.



Wednesday – little rasta braid with rest of hair loose.



Friday – high plait.

Thursday – ponytail.



But finally the debt is paid off.

One day, when Dayana manages to steal an expensive mobile phone, they use the money to buy a load of alcohol. They don't realise that at the same time, the police are preparing a major operation aimed at the children and gangs.

The music thuds and the neon lights flash. Dayana is in the middle of the dance floor when the police rush in. It's like in a dream. Sirens sound. People are shouting. Whistles are screaming. The riot police flood in.

The police gather up all the

children and soon Dayana is sitting in the back of a truck.

Joins the scouts

There are 46 children in total. The police take them straight to a reception centre called San Gabriel. To Dayana, San Gabriel looks just like all the other similar centres she's been to. She decides she'll run away again soon.

"I saw straight away that Dayana meant trouble when she arrived," says Michelle, coordinator at Hogares Claret's reception centre for street children in Bogotá, San Gabriel.

Dayana is angry. She and some of the others shout at the staff. The children's clothes are dirty and they smell bad. Several of them have fleas or lice.

Everyone has to wash and they are given new clothes. Red tops, blue tracksuit bottoms and black shoes. They are split up into scout patrols and allowed to elect their own leader. There's a weekly schedule on the wall. It says they are going to do yoga every day. And the scout patrols must meet together every morning and evening

for a debriefing. Dayana understands that this isn't really like the other centres she's lived at.

One weekend when there aren't many adults at the centre there's a fight, and they break some furniture. Dayana is involved. She expects some kind of punishment, but nothing happens. Some of the scout patrols are split up. Dayana gets to meet a psychologist. She still wants to run away, but she's really longing to see her grandma and younger siblings.

"They view us as people here"

The children who have lived on the streets stay at Hogares Claret's reception centre San Gabriel in Bogotá for two to three months. Some have come here because they were arrested by the police. Others because their parents are unable to look after them. What do they think about the help they get at Hogares Claret?



Gina, 14

"I don't mind that we're not allowed to leave here. I'd only be out there taking drugs. I didn't used to want to be with mum, but I've had time to think here and I've learned a lot. We get good food. When I lived on the streets I took drugs instead of eating. I hope I can go back to my mum and my sister soon."



Gloria, 15

"It was my parents who brought me here. I just caused arguments and ran away all the time. They hope I'll learn to be a better person and be able to take more responsibility at home. It's good here, they've got everything. When I was on the streets, I had nothing. They look after me here, and I try and help out. I understand now that I had everything before, but I didn't appreciate it."



Wendy, 15

"My parents got fed up with me taking drugs. They took me to social services and asked for help. The only thing I wanted then was to find my friends, go into town and buy drugs. I hated this place at first, but now I'm group leader of my scout patrol. It feels better. I like the way they treat us here. It's like they really view us as people."

Dayana's wardrobe

Everyone who lives at San Gabriel, Hogares Claret's reception centre for street children, has the same clothes. A red top and a pair of blue tracksuit bottoms. Everyone has black shoes, but they can also wear plastic slippers indoors. The clothes Dayana was wearing when she arrived at the centre are kept in a cupboard. There's a jacket, a pair of ripped jeans, a vest top and a pair of trainers. They've been washed. She'll get them back when she goes home or to another of Hogares Claret's centres for young people.

"I don't think they'd fit me now. I was so skinny when I came here. We hardly ate anything on the streets. But they are nice, my clothes. I wish I had clothes like that now," says Dayana.



Different

Dayana misses Rafael, but the staff at San Gabriel are kind. When she gets restless or fed up, they take her to one side and let her do other things. If she wants to, she can talk about how she's feeling. The adults listen to her.

Dayana feels like things are changing. There are lots of other girls here like her. Some are nice, but Dayana would rather be by herself.

"It always ends up with someone persuading me to do something stupid. I don't

want to get into arguments anymore," says Dayana to Michelle.

Instead she tries to help when younger girls arrive. Dayana prefers to be in the craft room or practice acrobatics.

"I'm different now than when I first came. I've tried to forget my old life over time, but it's hard. I never get any visits like the others. No one sends any parcels. I'd rather just go home," says Dayana to her psychologist at the centre.

Wants to be a lawyer

Children normally stay at San Gabriel for two to three months. Then they go back to their families or are placed at one of Hogares Claret's centres for young people around the country. There they get to go to school and are given support, so that one day they will be able to return to a normal life with studies or a job, free from violence and drugs.

When Dayana turns 15, the only thing she wants is for her grandma to come and fetch her. She doesn't, but they talk on the phone.

"You know I don't have any money, and neither does mum," says Grandma.

Dayana can only go home if there's someone in the family who can support her financially. If no one can take care of her, there are other homes at Hogares Claret where she can get the chance to go to school. When Dayana thinks about it, she cries, but she's also made a decision. Thanks to Hogares Claret, she's planning to study. She wants to be a lawyer and defend other girls like herself. 🌐



Daniella, 15

"It feels like they understand me here. They take good care of us. I ran away from home two years ago and I've been living on the streets ever since. When the police took me, they drove me to another place first. It was different from here. Even though I was actually tired of living on the streets, I still ran away because it was so bad. It's better here."



Laura, 13

"Really I'd like to go home, but it's OK here. They have good activities and we get enough to eat and plenty of sleep. When I get home again, things are going to change. It was so unnecessary, everything that happened. There was a girl at school who took my pen. I got really angry and hit her. The school said I had to leave and my mum was so sad and angry. She locked me in my room, but I escaped. She reported me missing and when the police found me, I was brought here."



Juan, 16

"At home they hit me and drank loads of alcohol and took drugs. It ended up with me going to the police myself. They took me to social services. I've been given help here. There's always someone here I can talk to, and we're given respect. But I get upset sometimes. I miss my girlfriend and our daughter, who is one. I hope to be able to see them soon."



Bryan, 15

"I think I had quite a good home life. But I still hung around town looking for girls. I bought drugs. In the end my parents talked to me about it. They said that I probably needed help and called social services. They made sure I got to come here. I'm getting help here, and my family often comes and visits. It feels like I've changed for the better here."



Luis, 16

"It's so calm here. There's always time to think about things and about life. We work a lot on ourselves: how we should live our lives and be good people. I miss my family every day. When I get out, I'm going to be with them all the time. It won't be like before, when I just drifted around town."



Craft workshop

Spending time in San Gabriel's craft workshop is just about the most fun thing Dayana can imagine. "If I could, I'd stay here all the time," she says.

There are boxes and bags here full of old plastic bottles, CDs, pipe cleaners, scraps of material, empty toilet rolls, glue guns, modelling clay and plaster. Today Dayana is making a doll out of a soft plastic material that can be shaped with your fingers. The material comes in different colours and can also be rolled out. It's made from recycled plastic. Dayana makes legs and arms that she attaches to the body. Then she rolls out a skirt and puts a head on top. Last of all come the hair and a broom.



A day with



5:30 a.m. All the girls are woken up.



6:30 a.m. Every day apart from on weekends, she must comb her hair and put it up in a special way.



7:00 a.m. Queue for breakfast in the refectory. There's always hot chocolate



Meditation to combat stress

Dayana meditates every day. All the children and young people at Hogares Claret's various centres meditate. Each session begins with yoga. Dayana has fetched a mat and placed it next to her friends on the ground in the sports field. A teacher puts on some relaxing Indian music. He gives instructions which Dayana and the other girls repeat. It's important to breathe in the right way. Deep, calm breaths. When they've finished with yoga, Dayana lies down. She closes her eyes and breathes calmly. The meditation lasts for 20 minutes. Many of the girls fall asleep. At Hogares Claret, yoga and meditation are a way of coping with and processing stress, anxiety, drug abuse and violence.



8:00 a.m. Morning meeting. The girls gather in the hall in scout patrols. Every day a patrol has a task to present. Each one of them must also talk about what their expectations are of the day.



9:00 a.m. Dayana has an appointment with her psychologist today. They talk about how Dayana is feeling and whether there's anything she needs help with.



10:30 a.m. The snack is served outdoors: a yoghurt and a biscuit.



Dayana



11:00 a.m. Every day they have yoga and meditation. The girls carry mats to the sports field. First they do a couple of yoga exercises and then they meditate. Sometimes Dayana falls asleep.



12:30 p.m. Lunch. The food is served at the table by the staff. There are always vegetables, fruit juice and sometimes some fruit for afters.



2:00 p.m. Today, Dayana's favourite sport is on the schedule. The girls are practising acrobatic exercises and a cheerleading number for a family day.



4:00 p.m. San Gabriel has a craft workshop. Dayana can spend time here making things with her hands. All the material is recycled. Sometimes they make little figures. Today Dayana is making a doll.



3:30 p.m. When it's time for the afternoon snack, Dayana and the others walk down to the refectory to fetch fruit.



5:30 At dinnertime, each scout patrol goes to the refectory separately. The staff are thanked enthusiastically in song, so it echoes between the walls.



9.00 p.m. Good night! Between dinner and bedtime they sometimes watch a film or just talk. Dayana often reads.



TEXT: ERIK HALKJAER PHOTOS: JESPER KLEMEDSSON

A different kind of prison

Brayan started stealing when he was 13 to help his mum. Four years later he was arrested by police for stealing a mobile phone. The judge let him serve his sentence at a juvenile detention centre, where you can be a scout, meditate and go to school.



Brayan would rather play football, but if there's no one to play with, he works out in the prison yard.

Structure is good

Brayan's prison is run by Hogares Claret, which uses the same methods there as it does at its other centres. The 101 boys at the prison, aged between 14 and 18, are organised into scout groups. They have one or two scout groups in each section and they appoint their own group leaders. On the walls there are clear daily schedules for lining up, debriefing, meditation, school, food and other activities. On top of that, all the boys have to help with sweeping the floors, washing clothes, cooking and cleaning the toilets.

"Keeping things tidy and having structure is fine with me, I think it's good," says Brayan.



Cesar, 16, shows Brayan his scars. He was shot and stabbed sixteen times in the stomach before he came to Hogares Claret's prison.

Meditation provides relaxation

There are few occasions during the day that provide as much relaxation as the day's yoga and meditation session.

"It's really nice," says Brayan.

"I was so angry that day. As usual we had no food to eat and I was hungry. My little sister was two. She was hungry too.

I saw an old man walking along the street holding a mobile phone. When he wasn't looking, I took it and ran. It wasn't the first time. I've been stealing and using drugs since I was 13. I stole to

help mum buy food. Sometimes I would sniff glue or smoke to cope with the hunger.

My dad took off when I was two and my big brother can barely afford to feed his own family.

Mum works as a home help for other families. It doesn't pay much. I stayed home from school because mum couldn't buy me a uniform or school things. I'd actually rather be studying and helping mum. She cries a lot

Brayan (on the left) behind bars at Hogares Claret's juvenile prison; a different kind of prison where you get to join the scouts, go to school, do yoga and meditate.



Love behind bars

Sandra, 17, is serving time at one of Hogares Claret's juvenile detention centres for robbery. That's where she met Andres Felipe. They found each other, and now they're a couple. Love between boys and girls at Hogares Claret's various centres is otherwise fairly unusual, because they are often kept separate.



because she can't give us food or help us go to school. When we eat, we've no food for the next day. It's always like that. I don't want to steal. I want to help in some other way.

Becomes a scout

The police had never caught me before. But this day they saw me. Mum came to the police station. She cried and told the police that I stole for her sake. I cried too, but I told mum everything would be alright.

I said sorry to the old man before I was sentenced to one year in prison. The judge arranged for me to serve my sentence with Hogares

Claret. I'm happy that he did. I'm getting an education here. I've become a scout and I go to school. And I'm learning about electronics and computers. I want to be a constructional engineer when I'm older.

My mum is proud of me. When she comes to visit, she says I'm like a different person. And that's after just three months.

When I get out, my old life will be behind me. Just imagine if I hadn't come here. Maybe I'd be in hospital now. Or worse. I might be dead." 🌐



Learning about computers

Apart from school, Brayan also wants to learn more about electronics and computers. He tries to attend the electronics and computer lessons as often as he can.

"I think I'll find both these subjects useful later on in life," says Brayan.



Brayan, 17

- **Wants to be:** Constructional engineer
- **Likes:** Playing football. Doing electronics.
- **Doesn't like:** Doing music.
- **Dreams of:** A new life outside prison.
- **Misses:** My family and my girlfriend.



The walls of Brayan's cell are broken and he can talk to the lad in the cell next door. The roof leaks.

"I've moved my mattress so it doesn't get wet," says Brayan. He's put up photos of his family and his girlfriend and he cleans regularly.

"If mum can clean, so can I," he says.

The door to Brayan's cell.

Rapping against crime

When Javier was 16, he killed someone. The judge didn't consider it to be murder, so Javier was sentenced to five and half years for manslaughter. He was placed at one of Hogares Claret's juvenile detention centres, where he got to know Kevin. They write

their own lyrics in the prison's music studio.

"Hug your family, embrace the universe," they rap.

Javier is going to serve the rest of his sentence at an adult prison, but he hopes to graduate from school first. When he's served his

sentence, he wants to be an architect.

Kevin will soon be released from prison. He wants to continue with his music.

"I can use music to tell people about my experiences and what can happen if you choose the wrong path in life," says Kevin.



Nominated Child Rights Hero

Rachel Lloyd

PAGES
66–85

WHY HAS RACHEL BEEN NOMINATED?

Rachel Lloyd has been nominated for the World's Children's Prize for her work spanning over 20 years to tackle domestic trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of children, CSEC, in the US.

During her childhood in England, Rachel herself was the victim of mental and physical abuse and was exploited in the sex industry in Germany.

Rachel moved to the USA at the age of 22 and was shocked to see girls as young as 12 being sold on the streets of New York. She founded *Girls Educational and Mentoring Services, GEMS*, at her kitchen table with just 30 dollars and a borrowed computer. Since then, Rachel and GEMS have transformed the lives of thousands of girls by offering love and practical support. They have also pushed through more child-friendly laws and systems, including New York's *Safe Harbor Act* – the first law in the US giving children who have been forced to sell sex the right to support and protection, instead of punishment.

Rachel's fight has brought about a change in society, from treating the girls affected as criminals, to seeing them as victims, and then survivors and leaders. Every year, 400 girls and young women receive direct services from Rachel and GEMS. Some 1,500 girls are reached via preventive programs, and over 1,300 professionals including social workers and police officers receive training about CSEC and girls' rights.



It's a Friday evening. The phone rings just as Rachel is finally heading home after a tough week at work. The police have picked up a girl who appears to have been forced to sell sex. She's refusing to talk to anyone. Maybe Rachel can help?

Rachel waits on a bench at the agency where the police take children who are in trouble. She looks around at the cold strip lighting and the pale green walls and doesn't like what she sees. How can a child who's been through terrible experiences feel welcome here?

After a few minutes, two staff members arrive with Danielle, a girl in a baggy tracksuit, her hair in a ponytail. She looks angry and sits down with her arms crossed.

Rachel comes from GEMS, an agency in New York that helps girls who have been exploited in the child sex trade. She intro-

duces herself and says:

"I'm just here to see how we can support and help you."

Danielle eyes Rachel warily and remains silent.

"I'm not from the cops or child welfare. What you tell me will be confidential. The reason I started GEMS is because I used to be in the life, too, so I wanted to have a place for girls who'd been through the same thing."

'In the life'

Most girls get curious when Rachel tells them that she was also caught up in the sex trade, or 'in the life' as the girls call it here. But Danielle is not easy to talk

to, so after a while Rachel tries a direct question:

"Can I ask how old you are?"

"Eleven."

"I'm sorry, how old?"

"I'm eleven."

Rachel is shocked. She's met many 12-, 13- and 14-year-olds who've been exploited in the child sex trade, but never anyone as young as 11.

Finally, Danielle starts telling Rachel she likes Mexican food and the Harry Potter books. That she wants to be a singer and write poems. And that she has a 29-year-old boyfriend.

DIFFERENT NAMES!

Several of the people featured in the stories on these pages about Rachel have had their names changed and their ages are not included. This is in order to protect their identities.



Most of the girls that Rachel fights to protect were forced into the child sex trade when they were just 13–14 years old. GEMS offers girls and young women between the ages of 12–24 a stepping stone to a better life, providing love and practical support.

Rachel has been fighting for 20 years for girls and young women who have been victims of domestic trafficking in the US. Today, many survivors of abuse become leaders themselves, helping other girls. The photo shows a group of survivors with Rachel and staff members at GEMS.



“Elizabeth’s 14 and Annette’s 16.”
“That must be really tough for you, hon. It seems like you’ve had a lot to deal with in your life.”
“I miss my mom,” says Danielle quietly.

Plenty still to do
Rachel finds it hard to get to sleep that night. As soon as she closes her eyes, she sees Danielle’s face. Rachel and GEMS have helped thousands of girls to a better life, but there are new victims all the time.

But even so, a lot has changed, Rachel reminds herself. Just a few years ago, Danielle could have been arrested. Now she’s entitled to support. GEMS can help Danielle become a survivor, who can support other girls in the future. And they’ll need her, because there’s still plenty more to do. 🌐

Boyfriend is a pimp
The man Danielle calls her ‘boyfriend’ is really her pimp. The man who is forcing her to sell sex to other men. Rachel mentions a hotel that pimps tend to use, and Danielle nods. She’s been there.

“You know how I know that hotel? ... One night, we got a call from a girl ... Her pimp was beating her and she was scared... So me and one of my staff drove down in the middle of the night and ran in and got her out.”

Danielle listens wide-eyed. Now she understands that Rachel knows what she’s talking about.

Misses her mum
Danielle says she met the pimp through her sister.
“Her and my other sister do the same thing that you and me did,” she whispers.
“How old are your sisters, hon?”

Children at risk of being trafficked

Any child can be caught up in **commercial sexual exploitation of children, CSEC**, in the US, but the majority are non-white children who have grown up in poverty, in particular:

- African American and Latino children.
- Children who have run away from home and/or are homeless.
- Children who have been taken into care.
- Children who have been victims of abuse.
- Children who suffer from addiction.
- Children who are differently abled (with disabilities).
- Children from the LGBTQ community.
- Children who come to the US as refugees or migrants and who do not speak English.



Rachel with her mum in England, before the problems started.



Rachel, 9, in her school uniform.



Rachel, 14, working as a model.

Rachel grows up

Rachel doesn't think twice about the fact that her dad isn't around until she starts school, and hears everyone else talking about their dads. She wonders where her dad is, and whether he thinks about her sometimes.

Rachel has a vague memory of Robert, a man who lived with her mum for a while and who she called 'dad'. She's happy when he suddenly comes back.

Mum is happy too. She and Robert had split up because he drank too much. Now she's desperate to give Rachel a stable family and perhaps she thinks true love true will conquer all. That's not what happens.

Mean and violent

Rachel's stepfather gets mean when he drinks. One evening he hits her and drags her up a long flight of stairs by the hair. After that she keeps away from him when he's drunk. Except when he hits mum. Then she gets in between them, jumps up on a chair and screams at him to

stop. But no one listens. Instead mum starts drinking too, so it'll hurt less. When Rachel begs her to throw Robert out, she says:

"I just need to try not to make him so angry."

Rachel doesn't want to stay at home any longer. She hangs around town with her friends and when she's 12, she starts drinking too.



Tired of life

By the time Robert finally leaves the family, it's too late. Rachel's mum is drinking day and night. Most of the time she just stares blankly in front of her. She often threatens to take her own life. Rachel tries to comfort her. But in the end, she doesn't want to carry on living either. She takes one of the bottles of wine her mum has hidden and mixes it with all the tablets she can find at home.

Rachel survives, but is rushed to a hospital, where she is kept in isolation for three weeks. A social worker wants Rachel to move in with a foster family, but she refuses. Her mum wouldn't be able to cope on her own. In the end, despite everything, Rachel is sent home to her mum. For a while she meets

with a psychiatrist once a week. He doesn't think things are going to work out well for her.

"By the time you reach 16 you'll either be dead, in prison or pregnant, or a combination of all those things," he guesses.

Factory job

Rachel drops out of school and takes a job at a factory to help pay for food and rent. At 14, she's too young really, but she lies about her age. In the evenings she goes out to bars, drinks and takes drugs. Sometimes she meets her mum when she's out. Her friends think it's fun. Rachel doesn't.

She dreams of something better, like becoming a lawyer or a journalist. She gets



As a 17-year-old, Rachel took a job at a sex club in order to survive.

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the chance to work as a model for a teenage magazine, but the modelling agency says she's too short for the best modelling jobs. They suggest she poses for 'sexy' images instead. It's illegal to take those kinds of photos of a 14-year-old. Rachel uses make-up to look older.

Rachel runs away

When Rachel is 17, she can't take it at home anymore. Her mother has become violent and flies into constant rages. Rachel runs away to Germany with some girls she's only known for a day. After three weeks her money runs out and her new mates have moved on. Rachel has tried getting restaurant jobs all over town, but she's been turned down everywhere. She finds herself in an area where there are dodgy bars and sex clubs. A red neon sign flashes 'Girls, girls, girls'. Rachel thinks: "I'm a girl", and goes down some stairs into the murky building. A few min-

utes and yet another lie about her age later, and she can start straight away.

A nightmare

At the club, Rachel's job is to dance and sit on clients' laps, drunken men who pull on her clothes. In the evenings she spends a long time in the shower, scrubbing herself until it feels like she's going to lose a layer of skin. She often wonders how she ended up here. It's like a nightmare that she can't wake up from.

Falls in love

Rachel meets a guy in Germany, JP. He has big beautiful eyes and she falls in love. JP seems nice at first, but he takes all the money she earns to buy drugs. If she doesn't earn enough one evening, he beats her. Sometimes he regrets it later. "You just need to try a bit harder, bring in more money," he explains. Rachel doesn't think there's anything odd about JP saying he

loves her while at the same time he beats her and says horrible things. She's used to that from home.

Escape!

It's not until JP almost kills her that Rachel seeks help at a church. She finally leaves him and the club, and starts working as a nanny for an American family.

For a long time, Rachel wakes up at night in a cold sweat, petrified. She has nightmares and her whole body aches from everything JP has done to her. But the family she's working for gives her lots of love and in the end she starts feeling better.

Rachel decides to help others and gets more involved in church. When she gets the opportunity to travel to the US and work in New York, helping women who sell sex to move on to a better life, she jumps at the chance. 🌐

Rachel's job as a nanny helped her recover. When she talks about her recovery today, she says: "They loved me back to life."



Rachel gives something back

For the first few days in New York, Rachel spends most of her time gazing up at the tops of the shimmering skyscrapers. But she soon discovers a darker side to the famous city.

Rachel's new job takes her across New York. During the day she visits shelters and prisons. At night she walks the streets where women are sold.

"Hi, I'm Rachel... Can I get you a coffee or hot chocolate? Do you need any help?"

No one wants to talk at first. The pimps are lurking in the shadows and get angry if she keeps the women from work. It's easier on quiet evenings. The women laugh at Rachel's English accent and teach her American slang expressions. Like that the street is called the *track*, and that women in the sex trade are *in the life*. The men who sell them are called *pimps*, the clients *Johns* or *tricks*.

Most of them have been 'in the life' since the age of 13 or 14. Almost all of them grew up poor, with little or no family support. Some ran away from home, lived in foster homes or were kicked out of their homes.

"But don't talk to us," says one woman. "It's the younger

ones who need the most help."

Rachel is shocked when she realises that there are girls as young as 12 on the street. She gets angry when they are arrested by the police and given prison sentences.

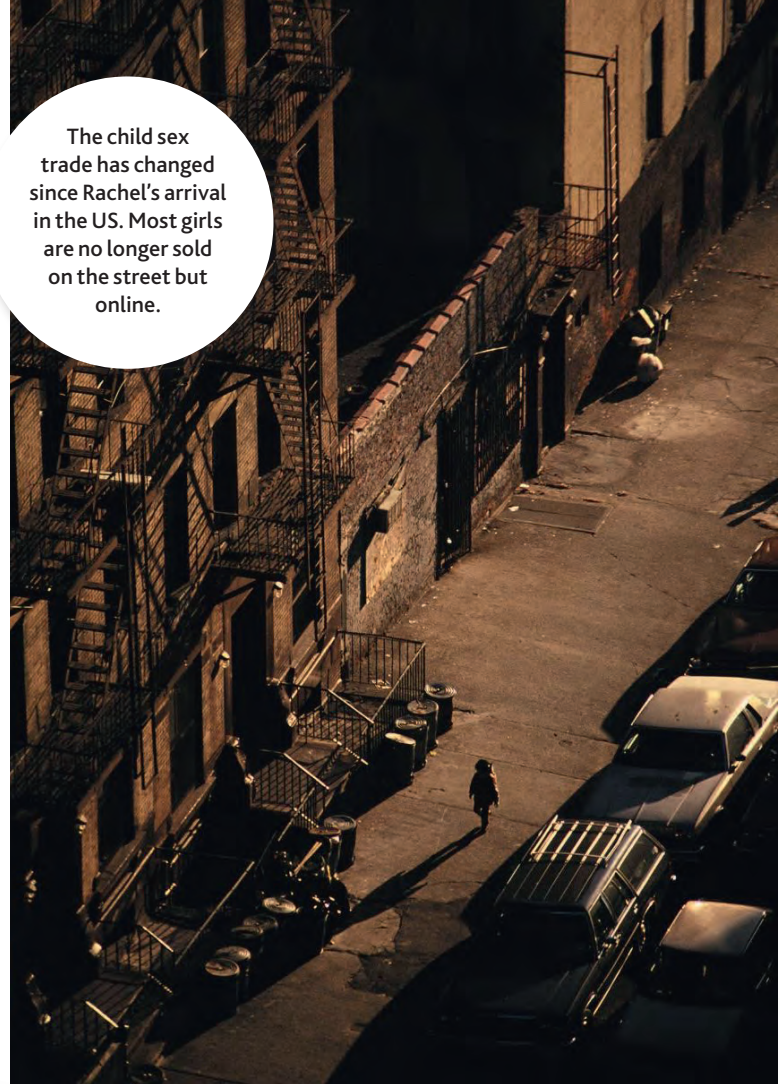
"You're children!" she says. "You need help, not punishment."

Rachel discovers that the laws in New York only protect children from the sex trade if they've been brought to the US from other countries by human traffickers. But most of the girls she meets were born and grew up in New York.

GEMS is born

When Rachel realises that there's no one helping the younger girls, she decides to do something about it. One year after moving to the US, she resigns from her job and starts her own organization at her kitchen table, with 30 dollars and a borrowed computer. She calls her organization GEMS (Girls Educational and Mentoring

The child sex trade has changed since Rachel's arrival in the US. Most girls are no longer sold on the street but online.



Services). Today, 20 years on, even Rachel herself finds it hard to understand how she went about it.

"I had no idea how to run an organization," she says. "But had to do something."

At first, all Rachel had to offer was love and sanctuary in her tiny flat in a deprived neighbourhood.

"The girls slept on my sofa, borrowed my clothes and cleaned out my fridge!"

Sometimes a pimp came round looking for a girl who'd escaped, and tried to break down the door. "But I was never really scared. I was

probably too inexperienced to be afraid."

One girl told Rachel that her pimp had warned her about GEMS.

"He said you'd try and brainwash me," she told Rachel.

"Why do you think he says that?" asked Rachel. The girl thought for a while before saying:

"Maybe because he's brainwashing me."

Love and education

As GEMS began to grow and attract more resources, Rachel opened a drop-in cen-





GEMS supports girls in their escape from the child sex trade. They become young leaders and identify as survivors, a word that some have even tattooed on their bodies.

tre with comfy sofas and cheerfully painted walls. Rachel wanted a place where everyone would feel safe, with rooms for private conversations, boxing and yoga, and to provide services such as counseling and workshops. She established safe housing for girls who were particularly vulnerable and had nowhere to go when they left their pimps.

Survivors become leaders

Many of the girls Rachel helped in the beginning have become survivors and leaders who inspire others.

“I started a group at GEMS, where we talked about everything from life on the street, to racism, law and politics. We learned a lot from one another. Now we’re working together as advocates against CSEC and we’re looking at the root causes. It’s

about tackling inequality, poverty, racism, sexism and discrimination, which particularly affects children of colour.” Lack of housing, inequality in health care and unemployment are also important factors.

Meeting presidents

GEMS’ young survivors and Rachel travel around and demand change.

“We meet legislators and politicians, presidents, artists and movie stars. And it’s the girls’ own stories that get people listening, that really make a difference,” says Rachel, who herself has given speeches at both the White House and the UN.

Program with impact

GEMS has grown to become one of the main organizations in the US supporting girls and young women who



Rachel and GEMS help vulnerable girls by providing secure accommodation.



The word ‘gem’ of course has another meaning in English. For Rachel, all the broken girls she meets on the street are beautiful gems. They just need a little help to shine and discover their true value.

GEMS’ drop-in centre is always packed with teenage girls and everyone loves Rachel’s cooking!



Many stars, like Beyoncé here, support Rachel and the work of GEMS.



are victims of domestic trafficking and Commercial Sexual exploitation of children. But Rachel dreams of a world where GEMS isn’t needed; a world where girls and women are not treated as property and are valued equally with boys and men.

“I want all children to have the chance to grow up in a safe environment with all the support they have a right to, at home, in school and from society.” 🌐

How Rachel & GEMS work

Rachel and GEMS support girls and young women aged between 12–24, who have survived domestic trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation in the US, through:

- Leadership training.
- Counseling, workshops, creative activities, sports and health activities like yoga and art therapy.
- Help with and advice about education.
- Safe housing for vulnerable girls.
- Guidance to independent living
- Preventive work.
- Legal assistance and alternatives to serving prison time.
- Campaigning *against* the child sex trade, *for* girls’ rights, justice, child-friendly laws and systems.



Shaquana took control

of her life

Shaquana opens her eyes. Where is she? Her head is pounding and her face feels tight and stings. Her whole body aches. She looks around, at the white walls and plastic wristband on her wrist. Her arms are covered with sores and bruises.

Shaquana is 15 when she is found unconscious in a ditch. Her upper lip is split in two; her jaw is broken, her nose as well. Most of her teeth are gone. When a nurse hands her a mirror, Shaquana looks at her broken face and thinks she's lucky to be alive.

The last thing Shaquana remembers is getting into a car on a dark street.

Beaten and yelled at

When Shaquana is little, she doesn't understand why her mum is always angry and

beats her. "Maybe it's because I'm doing something wrong?" she wonders. "Or because I'm ugly?" Her siblings often tease Shaquana for being darker than they are, and for her short hair. That's why she prays every night.

"Please God, make me look better. Please make my hair grow long."

No one has explained to Shaquana that her mum has a mental illness. The illness makes her afraid of almost everything, she yells and is sometimes violent.

The 'boy' who said he was 17 and wanted to be Shaquana's boyfriend was actually 29, twice her age.

He forced her to sell sex to other men.



When Shaquana wanted to leave the streets, she was locked in by her pimp and only allowed out to work.

Shaquana's parents split up when she is five years old. Her dad moves to another part of the US, while the children stay with their troubled mother in New York.

Sent away

The mum can't cope with looking after the children on her own. She sends Shaquana and two older siblings to their grandparents who live in the countryside, over 700 km away. Shaquana doesn't dare ask how long they are going to stay, but when she starts school she understands that it could be a long time. Shaquana wants to make her mum proud and studies hard. She gets good grades, despite the fact that she's almost always the last to finish her assignments. She's so afraid of doing something wrong.

Long wait

Several years pass. Sometimes her mum calls and says she's

coming soon. Then Shaquana is so happy, she cleans the house from top to bottom before running out onto the grass to look for four-leaf clovers for her mum, because they bring good luck. There's just one four-leaf clover for every 10,000 three-leaf clovers, but Shaquana never gives up. She spends hours on all fours in the grass, searching. And waiting. Because mum doesn't come, even though she promised.

After six years, when her mum remarries, she wants the children back. They move to east New York, a poor and violent area with drug dealers on the street corners and buildings covered in graffiti. Shaquana isn't used to all the people and noise in the big city, but she's happy that the family is back together again. They live in a large brown apartment block with small windows, surrounded by other similar brown buildings.

On her first day at school, Shaquana is a bit nervous about finding her way home again.

Tough school

The school is run-down and overcrowded. Some of the children curse at the teacher in the classroom, and the teacher swears back! Shaquana has never experienced anything like it.

In high school, Shaquana is one of the school's top learners. She wants to be her mother's pride and joy but her mum only seems to be able to see the bad things. When she isn't yelling and hitting her, she cries like a baby and wants comfort. Sometimes Shaquana feels so low, she wants to kill herself. But then who would look after mother?

Butterflies

Shaquana doesn't like asking her mum for money, so she

starts working in a shop. Instead of going straight home after school like she did before, she walks through the neighbourhood in the evenings after work. It feels different from during the day. It's full of people out playing music and hanging out on the street corners. A guy shouts out to her.

"Hi cutie! Come over here."

Shaquana quickly walks past. She's not used to talking to boys. But soon she runs into him again.

"Hey! Can't we just talk?"

The boy is always standing in the same spot. He calls to her every evening until Shaquana stops.

"You're pretty!" he says.

"How old are you? I'm 17."

"I'm 15," answers Shaquana, although she's actually only 14. She doesn't want to seem childish. They exchange phone numbers and she carries on home with butterflies in her tummy. No one



has called her pretty before.

Shaquana and the boy start meeting every day. It's a completely new feeling, having someone to talk to about everything. He says he'll take care of her always.

"Can't you skip school today? I miss you too much," he says sometimes. No one has missed Shaquana before. She starts cutting classes and the teachers are concerned and disappointed. What's happened to their top pupil?

Pressure

One evening, the boy wants to have sex, but Shaquana says no. Her mum is very religious and has told her that sex before marriage is a sin. The boy looks disappointed.

"If you love me you would want to be with me," he says.

He goes on about it every day and in the end, Shaquana gives in. She thinks that after all they're going to be together forever. But afterwards, the boy stops talking to her. When they meet on the street, he completely ignores her.

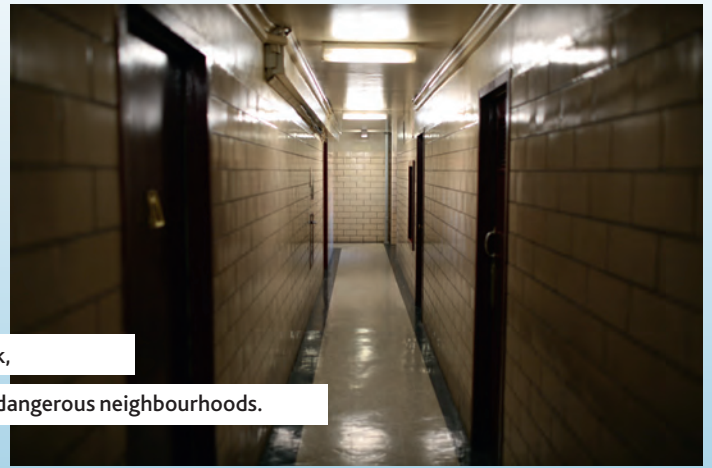
Shaquana is so unhappy that she can't eat or sleep. Thoughts whirl around her head. What did she do wrong? Why doesn't he like

her anymore? She doesn't have any friends to talk to about it. Talking to her mum or siblings is not an option.

She goes to his home. She cries, prays and begs, but he just looks at her coldly.

"I don't have time for little

Shaquana grew up in east New York, one of the city's poorest and most dangerous neighbourhoods.



girls. I'm a grown man."

Shaquana now discovers that like her, he's lied about his age. He isn't 17, he's 29, twice her age.

"I'm a pimp," he says. "If you want to be with me you have to work for me."

Shaquana doesn't know what a pimp does, but she's desperate.

"I'll do anything," she says. "Just take me back."

Sold to men

Things move quickly, because the pimp has had a plan from the first moment he saw Shaquana. He gives her high-heeled shoes and tiny, tight clothes. He explains that the job means she has to go with

other men for money.

Shaquana doesn't understand. She starts crying and the pimp gets angry.

"If you love me, you'll do anything for me," he says.

From then on, Shaquana only cries quietly, when the pimp sleeps. "I must be the only 14-year-old girl in the world doing this," she thinks.

At first, the pimp arranges 'dates' with various men. But after a while Shaquana has to stand on the street with other girls. They call it 'working the track'. There's a stream of cars driving slowly along the street. Shaquana tries to smile and wave, because her pimp is always nearby, watching. When a car stops,

Shaquana has to ask the man at the wheel what he wants. Some customers ask how old she is. She says what the pimp has told her to say.

"19."

"No you're not, you look 13," say some. But they still buy her.

Punishment

One night, Shaquana is arrested by police. In New York, it's illegal to sell sex. It's also a crime to have sex with someone under the age of 15. That automatically counts as rape. But the law doesn't seem to apply to girls like Shaquana. She is sentenced to juvenile detention, a prison for kids. No one asks about



To earn some extra money, Shaquana started

working in a shop like this one at the age of 14.

It was on her way home in the evenings that she met

the man who would become her pimp.

the men who sold her, or about the men who raped her.

In prison, everyone looks down on girls who've been sold on the street, both the guards and girls who have been convicted of crimes like theft or assault. They tell Shaquana she should be ashamed for allowing herself to sink so low. She is so stressed her hair falls out in great clumps.

Visit from GEMS

After a few months, Shaquana gets a visit from a young woman called Hailey, an outreach worker from the organization GEMS. She visits juvenile detention centres to look for girls who are victims of commercial sexual exploitation.

"What's happened to you? Who sold you? How are you feeling?" she asks Shaquana.

No adult has asked her these kinds of questions before; they've only judged her. Hailey says that

Shaquana hasn't done anything wrong.

"You're a victim, a child who needs support."

Shaquana has six months left to serve, but Hailey explains that she can be released earlier, provided she comes to GEMS and accepts help.

Early release

Mum lets Shaquana move back home and she starts school again. It's hard, she feels different. What if someone finds out where she has been?

It's a relief to go to GEMS every day after school, because she gets to meet other girls who've been through the same thing. She gets to know Rachel, who started GEMS, and never misses 'Rachel's group'. One evening a week, Rachel meets up with the girls, they share stories, cry, laugh and support one another.

"You are victims, but you can fight and become survi-

vors, have a good life," says Rachel.

Shaquana can hardly believe that Rachel, who seems so strong and professional, has also been 'in the life'. It gives her hope. But that hope doesn't last long.

Homeless

Shaquana's siblings have always picked on her, but now they call her dirty, cheap, a bad girl. But her mother yells the most.

"Slut! You'll never amount to anything. You'll end up back on the streets!"

Maybe her family is right and Rachel is wrong, thinks Shaquana. She feels broken inside. Maybe she can't be fixed?

One evening she comes home late and her mother throws her out.

"Don't ever come back," she yells, slamming the door.

Shaquana is alone on the street in the middle of the night. She's ashamed and

doesn't want to ask for help, not even from GEMS. She only knows one way of surviving: find a pimp who can give her a roof over her head and food in exchange for sex.

Dangerous work

Shaquana's new pimp has lots of girls living with him and he forces them to sell drugs and sex. He locks Shaquana in and only lets her out when she is going to work. One evening, Shaquana is kidnapped by a gang of men and abused for hours. But she doesn't go to the police as she's scared of being sent to prison again. Her pimp gets angry because she comes home late without any money.

One rainy evening, he sends Shaquana out onto the street:

"Don't come back with less than 500 dollars," he tells her menacingly.

The street is empty. Shaquana waits under a street light. She's afraid, because





Shaquana runs workshops and meetings

with girls, who are inspired by her.

She is living proof that girls can take control

over their own lives.



Shaquana

Lives in: New York City.

Busy with: Studying at university and working for GEMS.

Loves: My poodle Cherry.

Doesn't like: Human trafficking. CSEC. Racism.

Trusts: Rachel and the rest of my GEMS family.

Wants to be: A social worker and a role model for other girls.

she knows it's impossible to earn 500 dollars on a night like this. A car pulls up, but the man doesn't want to buy sex. He's a pimp.

"Come and work for me," he says. Shaquana, who doesn't dare go home, gets in the car. They drive for a long time in the dark, across the border, into another state.

Wakes in hospital

A few days later, Shaquana wakes up broken and bloody in hospital. The last thing she remembers is the new pimp forcing her out to work the streets. And that she prayed for a situation to happen, anything, so that she'd be able to go home.

A car stopped and she climbed in. Then everything went black.

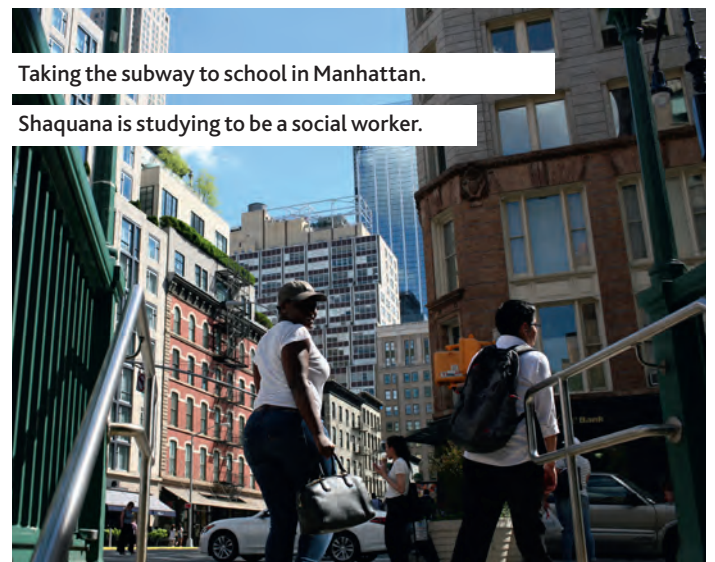
Graduation

Shaquana slowly recovers and goes back to GEMS, who help her with accommodation and

school. After three years she's standing on stage in a white gown and cap. Her friends from GEMS, her therapist, mum and sister are in the audience. The principle says:

"And now... graduating senior and class valedictorian: Shaquana!"

Rachel and the others leap out of their seats, cheering and clapping wildly. In her speech, Shaquana compares herself with a lotus flower. "Lotus flowers grow in muddy water and rise above the surface to bloom with remarkable beauty."



Taking the subway to school in Manhattan.

Shaquana is studying to be a social worker.

Her poodle Cherry is Shaquana's best friend!



Shaquana has given speeches in front of all kinds of people, from politicians to movie stars, and inspired them to campaign against the sex trade.



I can breathe

Shaquana is now 26. She says that after graduation, everything seemed great at first. She started college and took GEMS' leadership course. But something didn't feel right.

"I had no energy, I was always tired," recalls Shaquana. "The doctors couldn't find anything wrong with me, until I saw a psychiatrist who said I was suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, PTSD."

PTSD affects people who have been through such terrible experiences that they get stuck in the body itself. Shaquana was given treatment and slowly but surely, she began to feel better.

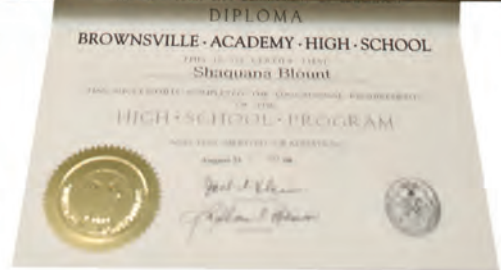
"I'll never forget the first time I felt: 'I can breathe!'"

A role model

Now Shaquana is at university and is an outreach worker

at GEMS. She visits shelters, schools, group homes and juvenile detention centres and tells the girls there about her life, about the child sex trade and GEMS.

"I want to help others, because I don't know where I would be today if it hadn't been for Rachel and GEMS," says Shaquana. "When you're in the life, you feel so isolated and alone. You think no one can understand what you're going through. But Rachel understood, because she'd been through it too. The fact that she managed to survive and turn around and help others, gave me strength and hope. Now it's my turn. I'm living proof to other girls that we can take control of our own lives." 🌐



When Shaquana gave her speech on high school graduation day, she ended by sharing ten rules for the future with her classmates.

Shaquana's Life lessons

- Always respect yourself!
- Never look down on anyone.
- When you make it in life, remember the journey you have traveled.
- Know the people around you.
- Never be afraid to admit when you are wrong.
- Live each day as if it were your last.
- Honor the greats before you.
- Never be afraid to ask for help.
- When you fall down know how to get back up.
- Remember that you are the best!

Safe harbour for young people



Girls from GEMS fighting for child-friendly laws together with Rachel.

When Rachel took up the fight against New York's unfair laws, she asked the girls who had been affected by them to help her.

One evening, Rachel looks at Nikki, who is in the middle of writing her speech. She knows that Nikki has a large, ragged scar that runs almost the length of her right thigh, from when a pimp stabbed her with a knife. And that Nikki has been locked up many times from the age of thirteen in an adult jail.

Tomorrow, Rachel and Nikki and a few other girls will travel to Albany, the political capital of the state of New York. That's where laws are written and approved. It's the first time ever that young survivors of the child sex trade will get their voices heard by those with power, decision-makers.

GEMS and the girls are demanding that American children be granted the same protection and support as children get who have been

brought to the US from other countries to be exploited in the child sex trade.

But opponents of a new law don't view the girls as children. One opponent claims that they are "...young adults who are very streetwise and who do not obey rules and are not willingly compliant with authority."

The girls learned early on to follow the pimps' rules. If only the politicians could see how good Nikki and others have been at listening to adults, maybe they'd stop saying such stupid things, thinks Rachel.

The tears flow

When the girls give their speeches in a dreary conference room, there is utter silence apart from the sound of people sniffing. Shaquana ends by asking them to change the law, for the sake of

Speak plainly!

"When we were fighting for a change in the law, we practised using the right words, although it was hard sometimes," explains Shaquana. "Many people look down on us girls and use language to make us feel worthless. So it's important that we use words and expressions that enable us and others to understand what we've been through, and that it's happening to others as well, all over the world."

What is the commercial sexual exploitation of children?

CSEC, Commercial Exploitation of Children, is when a child under the age of 18 is kidnapped, sold or tricked into having sex, or exchanging sex for money, food, drugs or a place to sleep. Some of us have felt that sex in exchange for money or food is our only way of surviving. But a world where we are forced to sell sex in order to survive, eat or get a roof over our heads is not OK.

What do these words mean?

Commercial means buying and selling, like in a shop. That children are treated as goods that someone advertises and sells.

Sexual means that it's something to do with sex; it could be anything from having sex to being filmed in sexual situations.

Exploitation is where someone with power, like an adult with money, takes advantage of or uses someone who is powerless, such as a girl living in poverty.

the children. An older man dries his tears and says:

"You are all to be commended. I promise you that I will do whatever I have to do to ensure this bill passes."

Long wait

It took four and half years to get the new law finally approved in New York in 2010. It's called The Safe Harbor for Exploited Children Act, the first state law in the country that recognised that children and youth were the victims,

not the criminals. Twelve states have followed suit since then.

"Now all we need to do is make sure that all girls really get the support they're entitled to," says Rachel. 🌐





Ginger

Lives: At GEMS safe house.
Likes: Music. Be with my little godsons.
Makes her cross: Lies and gossip.
Sad: When I feel lonely.
Wants to be: A midwife.
Looks up to: Rachel.

Finally home

“When I woke up for the first time in my room in the GEMS house, it felt different. ‘This can’t be true’, I was thinking, because I felt so safe.”

Ginger was born in Jamaica. “My mother died when I was three and my godmother took me in. I loved playing in the sun with all my friends. I thought I was gold.”

New life in the US

“I came to the US at 12 and was adopted by my aunt. It was exciting, but hard to leave everything I was used to.”

Ginger got good grades in school, but she was bullied.

“One girl cut my hair! But the worst thing was that my adoptive mom beat me. She used whatever she could lay her hands on, a shoe or a belt, and she used to say: ‘I’ll send you back to Jamaica’. I finally snapped and told a counselor. Everyone in the family got mad and stopped talking to me.”

Ginger lived with her friends and at a crisis shelter, but eventually tried to be reunited with her family.

“My adoptive mom didn’t want me there. She called the cops and said I was

suicidal, to come and get me. They took me to a hospital and put me in a box room for two weeks, even though I kept saying I definitely wanted to live. When I came out, my adoptive mom said she wouldn’t take me back. I felt broken.”

Accommodation for sex

Ginger put an ad out saying she needed somewhere to sleep, and it wasn’t long before she got a response.

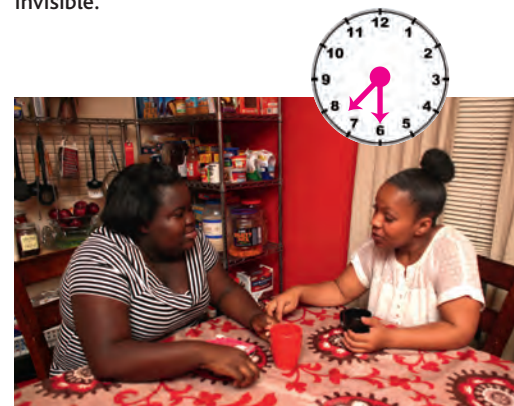
“A 40-year-old man came and picked me up. He promised to fix somewhere for me to stay, food and clothes, and to help me go back into school. In exchange, he wanted sex. I felt like I had no choice. After a month, he wanted me to have sex with his friend. I couldn’t do it. One morning I got up really early and snuck out. He tried to find me, but I managed to get away. If I hadn’t gone to GEMS’ safe house, I don’t know where I’d be now.”

7:00 a.m. Good morning

“I wake up and go to sleep with my phone! I do everything on it: Talk to friends, read the news, watch movies, listen to music and play games.”

7:30 a.m. Breakfast together

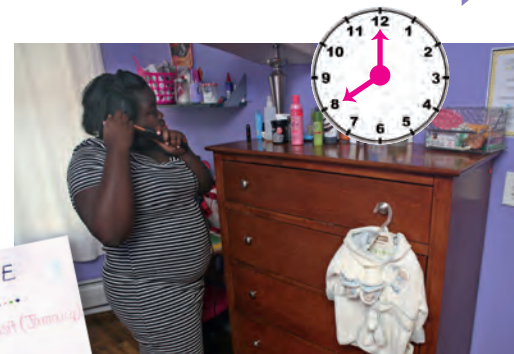
“We have a shared kitchen where we can make breakfast, eat and talk with our manager. It wasn’t like that in my adoptive family. They acted like I was invisible.”



8:00 a.m. Dreams for the future

“I love my room. I’ve put up pictures and a poster that I made at GEMS, about why I want to save money. Because I want:

- To visit my home in Jamaica.
- To get my own place.
- To open a day care, because I love kids.
- To open a hair salon.”





7:30 a.m.
Hair stylist
 "I'm good at hair styling and I often fix the other girls' hair, from plaits to curling and straightening hair."



8:45 a.m. Quick clean up
 "Everyone in the house helps take care of the cleaning. We have a schedule saying what we need to do every day!"

Ginger and her friends at GEMS style one another's hair!



"There's no sign on our building and we have to keep our address top secret. It's for everyone's safety, because what if the guy you were with decides to pop up and do something crazy."



9:00 a.m. Time to get out!
 "The only thing I don't like is that we always have to be out of the house by nine and we can't come back until early evening. But I keep busy! Studying, working and going to GEMS of course."



10:30 a.m. Full steam ahead at GEMS

"I love GEMS! I've made so many new friends here, we just get each other. During school I only come in the afternoon, but now it's the holidays and we're celebrating the annual 'Stop the child sex trade week'. We have workshops and fun activities every day. My favourite is a group where we talk about politics and current events."

"Rachel is someone you can count on. You can call her at any time. Last night she came to the safe house at midnight and stayed until morning, because one of the girls was going through a bad time. Rachel is like a best friend and she is very resourceful. And she's a great cook!"



8:00 p.m. Evening chat

"The safe house manager is always there to listen and support me if I feel sad or lonely!"



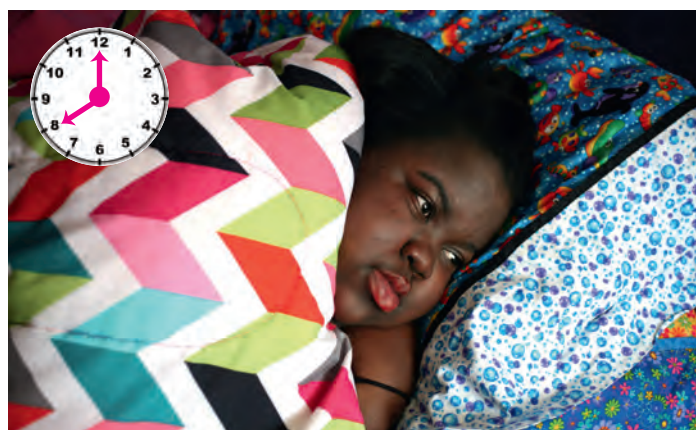
Need a safe home

New York is one of the most expensive cities in the world to live in. At least 70,000 homeless people live on the streets and in shelters. Some 30,000 of them are children. Most homeless people are with their families. Many of the parents have jobs, but they earn too little to afford the city's high rents.

Many girls are drawn into, or find it hard to leave the streets because they have nowhere to go. Girls over 16 can live in GEMS' safe house and get help to prepare themselves for an independent life. Younger girls often live in foster homes. Rachel and GEMS provide training for both the girls and the staff there, so that the staff understand what the girls have gone through and what they need and are entitled to in order to thrive.

10:00 p.m. Best blanket

"I loved the blanket I got the first time I came to the house. Then I ran away one time, but I came back after a while. They tried to give me a different blanket, but I wanted mine! It makes me feel safe."



The courage to leave

It's difficult to leave life in the commercial sex trade. Many girls are afraid of their pimp, that he'll kill them or hurt their families. But they're also afraid of the unknown. Rachel encourages the girls.

"Give it time, and your life will be so much better."

The life I deserve

"Leaving the life, leaving him, was one of the hardest things I've ever done. But as difficult as it was, it was the best thing I could have ever done for myself, because it was only then that I could finally live the life that I deserved all along."

Yeseni

Don't run from the future

"Sometimes you need to run away from things or situations when they are not good, but then if you get used to running, then you will run away from all the good things too. When I can find a good person to keep me focused with a reason to keep going and believing in myself, then I will not keep running away."

Jordan

Force of nature

"One of my favourite things to do is taking long walks in the park and clearing my mind. Tell myself over and over, it's going to get better, staying positive, staying away from negativity and from negative people."

Sondrah

Like a different planet

"The square life was like another planet to me, so it was like how am I gonna do this? ... I was scared because it felt like there was no escape. My pimp knew where my family lived, where my little brother went to school and where all my close friends lived. Every time I ran away he would know exactly where to find me ... It took me 5 attempts to finally leave the life but I went to a shelter and they referred me to a program [GEMS] ... I'm not scared anymore. And now I have the strength and wisdom to do bigger and better things."

Kristina

Think positive

"I am grateful for all the people in my life that saw the good in me, and loved me through the times that I didn't love myself. Keep going and keep trying, because you have already survived, you will survive and you are a survivor."

Sheila

Starting over

"Spending most of my life in foster care ... I dreaded starting all over again. In youth leadership class I began to understand that I wasn't alone in my experience ... Once I got into a program [GEMS] where other girls had similar experiences and were in leadership roles, I realized that starting over was just the beginning and it was possible. I was still young and I had a lot to look forward to."

Cynthia

Not worth dying for

"It was hard to leave my pimp, in my mind he gave me love, affection and security. This was all I knew... After getting locked up numerous times, raped and abused by tricks, I wondered was he REALLY protecting me ... I ask myself, is this love worth dying for ... I wanted change... from the abuse and from all the false promises... I just knew that if I can survive all of that, I can survive leaving him too."

Lakisha

Leave it behind you

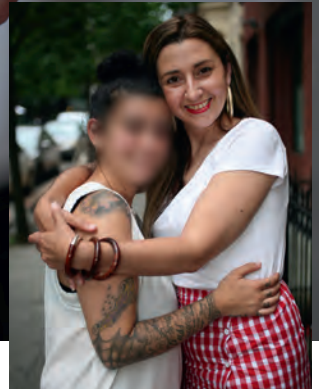
"Leaving the life is difficult ... especially if it's all you know... I'm 18 and I been in the life since I was 14 years old... Being square and living life regularly... It's overwhelming, it's confusing, it hurts and at the same time, it doesn't. You just gotta leave it ... just suck it up and keep it pushin."

Yvonne

Missed stuffed animal

"Leaving was thinking too far ahead for me, because sometimes I felt like lucky to get to the next day. So when I finally left I felt so vulnerable, without anything to comfort me, like my old clothes or a stuffed animal I really loved ... Looking back now, I have pride in my actions. Remember everyone has a past and it's not where you came from, it's where you're going."

Leslie



Life leaves its mark

Many of the girls at GEMS have tattoos all over their bodies. Faith is one of them. The worst thing anyone can say is that they look nice, because they weren't her choice. Her various pimps marked her with her name or symbols to claim that she belonged to them.

I got into the life when I was 12," says Faith, who was sexually abused by her stepdad from the age of four.

"I didn't tell anyone, I felt no one would believe me. I ran away instead."

A pimp did Faith's first tattoo when she was 15.

"Since then I was branded by different pimps who wanted to prove that they owned me. I hate the tattoos because they remind me of everything I've been through: had guns pulled on me, raped and taken across state lines."

Left the life

"I decided to leave the life when I found out I was pregnant. But what really stopped me from going back was I found God. Girls leave for lots of different reasons. For me, when God found me I found hope.

"I'm not in the life anymore, but the tattoos will be there forever. But they are not me; I'm a different person now. I'm tired of being judged and looked at. Without the tattoos I'd have more opportunities. Now,

people think I'm a gang member. I want to get rid of them but it's very expensive."

Looks like a victim

"Many programs [that campaign against the sex trade] revictimize you. They don't want you to remove your tattoos, they like it, think you look tough and like a victim. So they can put you on stage and get publicity. Use you to raise money, just like the pimps did. But Rachel and GEMS are different.

I have never met a social worker or therapist that really could understand what I have gone through. But Rachel knows how it is. She can understand and relate. She would never ask 'Why? How could you do all that bad stuff?' GEMS is limited in what they can do, but at least

here they accept you for who you are. There really isn't any other program like GEMS."

For my children

"I struggle every day with feelings of loneliness and abandonment. It's pain on top of pain, and the tattoos bring back memories. But for me the most important thing is to raise my children as well as I can, with love," says Faith. 🌐

Male Allies

Rachel says it is essential that boys and men are involved in the fight against CSEC and domestic trafficking. "That's why we've launched the 'Male Allies' campaign, which invites everyone to stand by our side."

Teaching little sis to be strong

"My mother has made sure I have respect for girls and women," says Jordan, 18, who often looks after his little sister.

"She's only three, but I'm gradually going to teach her about the dangers in life. Of course I'll support her as a brother. But what's most important is that she can take a stand for herself and her rights."

Jordan

Gabriel proudly wears his GEMS t-shirt with the words girls are not for sale.

"I've become more conscious of my behaviour since hearing the girls' stories. We have so many words that describe girls in a negative way; they're part of our culture. Guys and girls use them without thinking. I know better now. If I hear people use them, it does not sit well with me and I tell them to stop."



Grateful for the men in my life

"When I was growing up I was always hanging with boys. I didn't really trust girls. Then I started developing and boys turned into men, who were interested in me just for sex. Then came the life, where I was sold by a man and bought by men... When I got out of the life, I felt like I could never trust another man ... I expected them all to be the same, but over time I began to meet men who were more like brothers and friends to me... I began to see men as humans, all different, with different experiences, instead of just these nasty, emotionless, sex-driven robots. It took time though, but I'm grateful for some of the men in my life, and I'm grateful for my friendships with women too."

Farah



Nominated Child Rights Hero

Valeriu Nicolae

PAGES
86–105

WHY HAS VALERIU BEEN NOMINATED?

Valeriu Nicolae has been nominated for the World's Children's Prize because of his tireless struggle for the very poorest and most vulnerable children in Romania and throughout Europe.

Valeriu grew up in extreme poverty and was the victim of discrimination because he was Roma. The Roma people are an ethnic group that has lived in Europe for almost a thousand years, but they have always been the continent's poorest and most discriminated minority.

Valeriu has been fighting for over 20 years to tackle discrimination and racism, and to protect the rights of all children living in poverty. In 2010, he began working to help children and their families in Europe's poorest and most dangerous district for children – the Ferentari ghetto in Bucharest, which has been forgotten by the rest of the world.

When Valeriu started a club for children in the ghetto, hardly any children were attending school there. Children and young people were dying every month of malnutrition, abuse, drug overdoses and suicide. The *Alternative Education Club* became the focus of efforts that helped change the lives of Europe's poorest children. Today, hundreds of children get help every year to cope with school, learn about their rights and get support to develop and live a good life. The poorest children are given shoes, clothes and sometimes food. Children who take drugs and/or are exploited and forced to sell drugs and/or sex are given support to leave that life behind and have the childhood to which they are entitled. Valeriu also fights for better laws and systems that protect children from violence, discrimination and hate crimes, and strengthens their rights and opportunities.



Valeriu fights for the very poorest and most discriminated children in Romania and Europe.

One weekend, Valeriu walks quickly through the Ferentari ghetto. He greets the children playing among the rubbish heaps on the pavement outside the dilapidated buildings.

A group of children are playing by a container overflowing with rubbish. Some have climbed inside to look for something of value, perhaps to sell. They poke about carefully among the refuse, because they know that drug users throw their used needles everywhere. One prick from a needle could infect you with serious diseases such as HIV and hepatitis.

Big change

On weekdays, the children are at school at this time. But that's not how it was when Valeriu first came here. The few children that had even started school soon dropped out. Most parents in Ferentari have little or no

education and they can't help their children with homework. Prejudices about poor people in the ghetto meant that children from this area were often bullied at school by both other pupils and teachers.

When Valeriu decided to start up an alternative education club for children in Ferentari, offering help with homework and fun activities, he was warned against it. Usually by people who had never even been here. Many said: "The ghetto is hopeless, nothing will ever get better there."

When Valeriu and his friends built a new play area in Ferentari people told him: "It'll be ruined in a few weeks, everything broken

and covered in graffiti." But today, seven years on, the play area still looks like new. The children clean it and look after it.

Smell of rubbish

There's a horrible smell from the wastewater that leaks from the buildings and rotting rubbish on the ground. The council stopped collecting the rubbish here ages ago and no one listens when the people in Ferentari complain. Valeriu spots a woman he knows sorting through the rubbish. She has three children who come to the education club. She's looking for plastic bottles so she can get the deposit back on them and buy food today. Like most other adults in the

ghetto she's unemployed. Many become desperate and start selling drugs or sex, or steal to support themselves. This mum doesn't do any of that but the children's father is in prison.

Poorest street

Valeriu enters a doorway on Livezilor Alley, the poorest part of the area and one of the most dangerous city blocks in the world for children to live in. Criminal gangs that control the drug and sex trade here make many people feel powerless and afraid. Valeriu was also afraid at first. He's had his tyres slashed, and been threatened and chased off many times. Some thought he was trying to disrupt the drug trade. Others were just afraid he would take their children from them.

Home visit

Valeriu goes up the stairs and knocks on a door in a dark corridor. Zana, 11, pulls open the door and says: "Hi Valeriu!"

Zana lives in the only room in the flat with her little sister Rebeca, 6, and big brother Bobo, 13. Their great-grandmother, who is almost blind, has been looking after the children since their mum ended up in prison. The flat is very neat and clean but run down and cramped. It does have electricity and running water, unlike many others in the area.

Children's club popular

At first, Valeriu had to go



Zana and her siblings get help with homework at the Alternative Education Club.

Zana misses her mum, who is in prison.



round the area and talk children like Bobo and Zana into coming to the club. He doesn't need to do that anymore. But he still visits the children at home now and then. Sometimes he discovers that a parent has a bad drug problem or has gone abroad to get some money together and left the children on their own. If that happens, he tries to find a solution.

Bobo goes to football training with Valeriu every Sunday.

"We're finally starting a girls' team," Valeriu tells Zana. "You should join!"

Valeriu talks to their grandmother too. Does she need anything? Have the trouble-makers in the building been causing any problems?

Grandma says things are quiet at the moment, but that the children miss their mum.

Helping all children living in poverty

Bobo and Zana's family are Roma, one of the poorest minority groups in Romania.



Rebeca, Bobo and Zana live with their grandmother in a one-room flat in Ferentari.

They make up less than ten percent of the population, and the term Roma actually has nothing to do with the country's name Romania. The Roma people are called Roma all around the world. The Roma have lived in Europe for almost a thousand years, but have nearly always been excluded from society, harassed and even killed just because they are born Roma. Valeriu is also Roma and has been campaigning for many years against prejudices and racism. But the important thing for him is not just helping Roma children, but all children that are living in poverty in Ferentari.

Valeriu gives back

Valeriu was one of the few Roma of his generation who studied at university, despite a difficult childhood. He left his homeland Romania and worked well-paid jobs in Europe. Some were about strengthening the rights of the Roma people. But after a few years, Valeriu had had enough. He was tired of writ-

ing lengthy reports that no one seemed to read. He couldn't stand the thought of going to another conference at a luxury hotel and listening to fancy speeches about how to help poor people. Because nothing got better for poor children like Bobo and Zana; if anything, it got worse.

"I felt guilty," says Valeriu. "I grew up like them, in extreme poverty. It was tough, I had nothing and I had to work really hard. But there were also people who helped and supported me, so I was able to have a good life. Now I have everything I need, and I felt I should do the same for other children. That I should give something back."

Valeriu moved back home and started the *Alternative Education Club* in Ferentari.

"You can't wait for someone else to change something you think is wrong. Only when you've done something yourself can you ask others to help. Anything else is hypocrisy. That's how I feel, and I hope the children in Ferentari feel the same." 🌐



In Ferentari where Valeriu is fighting for child rights, some streets and parks are full of rubbish and used needles.



Valeriu's Mother's Day card to his mum.

Valeriu encountered racism frequently when he was growing up. In the picture at right, he is 14 years old.

Valeriu grows up

Valeriu grew up in the countryside in an area where everyone was different, yet they managed to get along. He had lots of friends who looked different and spoke many languages. But when he was seven the family moved to a bigger town. Suddenly no one wanted to play with him anymore.

On the first day in our new flat, mum told me to go out and play so she could clean in peace. I saw a girl in the yard with blond curly hair who looked friendly. I asked if we could play, but she replied: 'I'm not allowed to play with gypsies because they've got lice.'

Valeriu didn't understand. He started crying and ran home to his mum. She stopped cleaning and sang him a song to cheer him up.

"It was about a brown bear who had to struggle to get along in a world full of white bears. Later, she made up her own song too, about how if you're kind and you work hard, you'll get along in life. She never let me blame any

difficulties on the fact that I was Roma. She said: 'You have to prove that you are good enough. And to be good enough, you have to be at least ten times better than all the non-Roma.'

Racist stepfather

To Valeriu's new neighbours, he wasn't just an ordinary boy, he was a "dirty gyppo kid". Even his stepfather, who wasn't Roma, used to call him gyppo kid instead of Valeriu. The word gyppo was used by many to describe people from the Roma community, often as an insult.

"My stepdad hated Roma, just like others in Romania and many other countries have done for centuries. He had all the usual prejudices,

like that Roma are dirty, lazy and thieving. In fact I never could understand why he married a Roma lady! But he liked to drink, so maybe he felt at home with the many alcoholic men in our family."

Clean and well-fed

Valeriu's mum worked hard in and outside the home, so that Valeriu and his two older stepsiblings would have a good life.

"We were poor, but we always had clean clothes and never went hungry."

When the stepdad drank, he became violent.

"He often said he was going to kill us all, but he mostly beat my mum. Sometimes she hit back, with the dustpan, or threatened him with an iron bar to make him stop. I often got between them to protect her. But we didn't stand a chance against dad, he was much bigger and stronger than we were. And there was

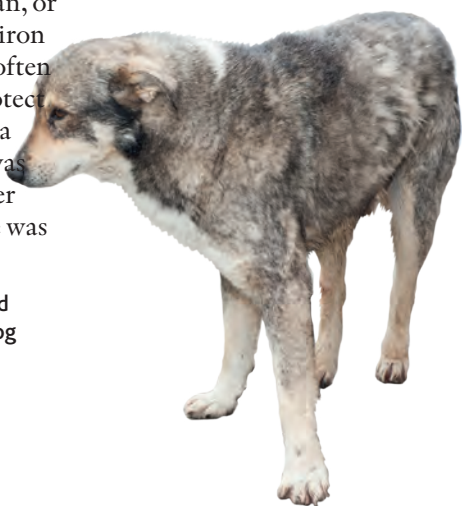
no point in complaining to the police because almost all men beat their wives and children, even the policemen! It was accepted in society. My aunt even told mum she should be grateful that he beat her, because it meant that he loved her!"

Left to own devices

Valeriu soon realised that most of the parents in his new neighbourhood didn't allow their children to play with Roma children.

"It was good in a way," says Valeriu. "I didn't have anything to do, so I wandered around and found a library. The lady who worked there didn't have any children of

Valeriu extracted an infected tooth from an abandoned dog and gained a faithful friend.



Enslaved for 500 years



The Roma migrated out of India to Europe nearly 1,000 years ago. They have been subjected to antigypsyism, racism or prejudice against Romani people, for nearly as long. The word antigypsyism describes the ancient prejudices about the Roma which have resulted in discrimination against them – being treated worse than others. Just like the Jews in Europe, the Roma were not allowed to become residents and cultivate land in the past. Instead, they were forced to constantly move. In Romania, the Roma were enslaved in the 1300s and used by the state, church and individuals. Slavery was first abolished in 1860, around the same time as in the US. World War II saw the worst organised mass

killing of the Roma in history. Half of Europe's Roma people, hundreds of thousands of children and adults, were murdered by the Nazi regime. Even today, the Roma are the most discriminated minority group in Europe. In Romania, they are blamed for almost everything that goes wrong, even though only three percent of the population are Roma and few of them have any power to influence society. Thanks to the battle being fought by Valeriu and others against antigypsyism, some things have improved. For example, new laws are in place to protect Roma children better and give them the same rights as other children to education, health care and a safe home. But it still is not enough; laws must also be followed...

her own, so she looked after me and showed me loads of great books. I read adventures, history and about other countries – and I learned a lot.”

Valeriu also made a friend – an abandoned dog.

“It was a bit bad-tempered at first, but I realised it was in pain from an inflamed tooth. I got the dog to open its mouth and managed to take out the bad tooth. After that, the dog was my faithful friend.”

When Valeriu was 12, he fell in love with a girl whose parents didn't like Roma people either.

“It was after the summer holiday, so I was even darker than usual. I remember scrubbing myself with a hard brush to try and make myself whiter, but of course it didn't help!”

Dictator falls

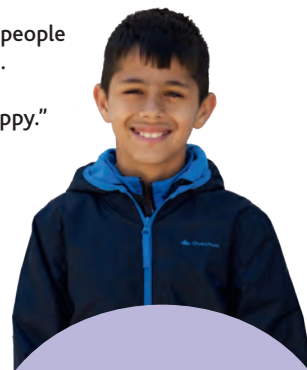
During Valeriu's childhood, Romania was ruled by a dictator who squandered the country's money on himself and his family, while the people lived in poverty. “The only good thing,” says Valeriu, “was that during the final years, the Roma were treated the same as any other Romanian, neither better nor worse.”

1989 saw revolution and free elections. But after so many years living under a dictatorship, it was difficult to establish a real democracy. The people elected politicians who promised to make everything better, but who then just continued to make themselves rich. Dirty politics.

In the end the people grew tired of dirty politics. Valeriu and hundreds of thousands of others took to the streets and

Cristian, 11

“I get so angry when people pick on you and fight. Playing football with Valeriu makes me happy.”



Daniel, 13

“My favourite subject at the Education Club is maths. I also want to learn computer programming and be better at football!”

We love the Education Club!

Rebecca, 12

“I love the Education Club because I learn new things here and get to play with friends. Valeriu and the others are kind and support us. Irina (photo) is good at helping me understand things!”





Valeriu actually prefers basketball to football, but the children in Ferentari disagree!

protested until they got what they wanted: a new election. For a period of a year, while preparations were under way for the election, a temporary, apolitical government was put in place and Valeriu was asked to work as an adviser.

“I got to work on reducing poverty, increasing gender equality and protecting children and women from violence. It was interesting to see how power works from the inside! I also saw how power changes some people. Suddenly, some felt they were better than others, even though they were exactly the same people as before.”

Two jobs

Until recently, Valeriu had two jobs. From Monday to Friday he was working in Brussels in Belgium, at the European Commission on Human Rights. Valeriu had been appointed Special

Representative of the Secretary General for Roma Issues. Every weekend, Valeriu went home to work at the Education Club and the sports center in Ferentari, together with his family and friends.

“None of us got paid. My salary from the European Commission was enough. We just did what we could,” says Valeriu.

Dreams for the future

Now Valeriu has decided to give up his well-paid position and come back home, to work full time on what he feels most strongly about.

“I will continue my work with the children in Ferentari. I also want to start a company, because the children who grow up here need somewhere to work. I’ve got lots of ideas that I want to make a reality together with the children in Ferentari.”

What does Valeriu do?

Valeriu and his network of friends, volunteers and organisations work with the following initiatives:

- The *Alternative Education Club* in Ferentari, which helps hundreds of children every year. The children get help to cope with school and get to do lots of different activities: sport, dance, drama, music and other creative workshops. They also learn about their rights, health and democracy, and they go on trips and study visits.
- The poorest children are given shoes, clothes and sometimes food.
- Children who can’t live at home have the chance to move to decent foster homes, and are later reunited with their families if, and when possible.
- Children who take drugs and/or are exploited and forced to sell drugs or sex are given support to leave this life and have the childhood to which they are entitled.
- Valeriu also campaigns for the introduction of laws and systems that protect children from violence, discrimination and hate crimes, and to strengthen their rights and opportunities.

We love the Education Club!



Andrea, 10

“I like learning to dance. When I’m older, I want to be a dancer and teach other children to be good dancers.”



Bianca, 12

“Our teachers at the Education Club are like really good friends or extra parents!”



Nicoleta, 13

“I’ve been going to the Education Club since I was little, it’s helped me a lot. Now I also help the younger children.”



Marian, 15

“The thing I hate most is when boys fight and when it snows! My favourite is playing football. When I’m older, I want to be a chef or a waiter.”



The children from Ferentari helped out with the campaign against racism. Bobo, 13, got to meet his football heroes.



Cleaning up football



When Valeriu launched a campaign against racism in football, hate crime cases dropped from 80 a week to zero!

It's time for the match at Romania's biggest football stadium, and 30,000 spectators are sitting in the stands. Several million watch the match on TV. As usual, one team's supporters sing chants during the match, like 'We've always hated gypsos', and they wave banners that say: 'Death to gypsos'. Tens of thousands in the crowd sing along. Valeriu wonders if they ever think about how it really feels for Roma children who love football. He decides to do something to tackle racism in the world of football.

Football against racism

It's been many years now since Valeriu started the campaign Racism Breaks the Game. He got both the

Romanian and European football associations on board. All major football matches started with a short film against racism and antiziganism (discrimination against Roma). Sometimes children from Ferentari and other ghettos got to go out on the pitch with the players.

"I was nervous, but it was fun," recalls Bobo, 13, who got to shake hands with famous players and wave to tens of thousands of spectators at one match.

Activities were also organised at sports clubs and at children's and young people's matches to tackle racism and antiziganism. Hate crimes in football have plummeted from 80 a week, to zero. Successful football players

from the Roma community no longer keep their background secret like they used to, to avoid being attacked and subjected to hate crimes.

Football against violence

Now Valeriu and his friends are continuing with the campaign.

"We want to fight against racism and antiziganism, but also domestic violence, which affects women and children. Many of the men who beat their families are at the football stadiums, on the pitch and in the stands." 🌐



At football matches in Romania, the spectators used to shout racist chants about Roma, until Valeriu launched his *Racism Breaks the Game* campaign.



On an old banner, football supporters paid tribute to a mass murderer who killed many Roma.



The children of ghost alley

Toto, 10, skilfully picks his way between the piles of rubbish on the street and jumps over puddles and broken bottles. He gives the grey, starved-looking people standing and sitting on the street a wide berth. They look a bit like ghosts, and many often call Toto's street 'alley of the dead'.

Toto knows that when adults drink and take drugs, they can get angry and afraid over nothing. It's best to keep your distance. His stairwell is dark because all the bulbs are broken. Water drips from the roof. The walls are covered in graffiti, and in the corners there are used needles discarded by drug users. There are no handrails to hold onto. Someone has unscrewed them long ago and sold them for scrap.

Cleaning for mum

When Toto opens the door to his flat, his two sisters are cleaning. Andrea, 13, is wiping a table and Ana, 16, is scrubbing stains on the wall.

"When mum returns, she should find the house cleaned so that we can start again from scratch," says Andrea, rubbing harder.

"When's mum coming back, Andrea?" asks Toto.

"None of your business," says Andrea. She sounds angry, but really she's sad. Mum has been in prison for over four years and she has three more years to serve. She's asked to be released early and is waiting to hear from the prison authority.

"I'm hungry," complains Toto.

"I'll make soup", says Ana and explains that she can't at the moment because she doesn't have a hotplate.

Makes a hotplate

After a while, Toto's Uncle Sile arrives carrying a large white block of plaster that he puts on the floor.

"I'm starving!" whines Toto.

"Easy, easy," replies Ana.

Uncle Sile takes out a knife and starts cutting deep slots in a zigzag pattern on the top of the white block.

"I'll fall asleep asleep by the time you make this soup," says Toto. He watches as Uncle Sile pokes a coil into the slots and then plugs one end of the coil into a wall socket. Soon, the coil in the white block starts to glow a hot orange-red. The hotplate is ready and Sile places a saucepan on top.

Takes drugs

While Ana stirs the soup, the door opens and several young men enter the room.

"I'm not having junkies in the house anymore," shouts Ana angrily, but no one listens. Everyone knows that their mum is in prison and

that the children are living on their own. The men sit on the floor and on the sofa and start filling their needles with drugs. Uncle Sile does too.

"Relax. I can give you some," says a teenage boy to Ana. She shakes her head.

"Leave me alone."

Toto sits on the sofa and watches as the older boy sticks a needle in the crook of his arm and leans back. When his eyelids start flickering, Toto

knows the drug has begun to work. Ana has taken drugs too before, but she's trying to stop now.

Andrea has gone out, but now she comes back and gets upset at the sight of all the people.

"God help us make sure you all go to prison," she says.

Andrea leaves the flat while Toto curls up on the sofa and falls asleep.



Toto's uncle makes a simple hotplate in the flat. There is no running water or a toilet.



Many people used Toto's flat to take drugs, because the children were living there without any adults.



Toto was about the same age as this boy when he first met Valeriu.

Stays in prison

According to Romanian law, Toto's mum can be released after serving two-thirds of her sentence, but in prison they don't think she regrets what she did enough. She has to stay in for longer.

Most people sentenced to prison for selling drugs are themselves drug addicts, women and teenagers. They only earn a little money which goes to food for the day and

the drugs they take themselves. The criminal gangs that make the drugs and earn millions never seem to get caught. Instead they build beautiful houses and buy expensive cars. Some of the money is spent on bribing the police and politicians, so they can go about their business without being disturbed. Lots of people in Ferentari have a good idea who's running the drug trade, but they wouldn't

dream of snitching to the police. It would put their lives and the lives of their children in danger.

Meets Valeriu

One day Toto's cousin says: "Come and play football." Toto has heard that a man is organizing football training in the sports hall next to school, but he's never plucked up the courage to go.

Valeriu is a man in a woolly

hat and tracksuit. He takes one look at Toto's plastic slippers and quickly digs out a pair of football boots for him from a huge pile of shoes on the floor.

Toto starts going to football practice every week. He gets a top and tracksuit bottoms to play in too. After a while, Valeriu asks if he'd like to come to homework help too, at what is known as the *Alternative Education Club*.





When Toto starts going to football training, he only has a pair of plastic slippers to play in, but Valeriu gives him real football boots and a tracksuit.



Toto at the age of 10.

The council has stopped collecting rubbish in Ferentari, and the families have nowhere to get rid of their rubbish. Some of the adults tried to clean up at first, but now everyone has given up. The rubbish attracts rats, which spread disease.



Toto doesn't want to at first. He's never been to school and he's ashamed that he can neither read nor write. He can only count to nine, although he's ten years old. But in the end he goes and Andrea joins him.

Different kind of school

Valeriu and his friends borrow a classroom at the school in Ferentari in the afternoons and on weekends. A colourful sign on the door that says *'Alternative Education Club'*. They've made it look nice inside, with pictures on the walls and paper chains hanging from the ceiling. Every week, Valeriu's friends from the city come to help the children learn to read, write and count. Some are teachers, but most of them have other jobs. Some are lawyers, bus drivers, IT technicians or nurses. Before they came to the club, most of them didn't know anything about Ferentari or the poverty here. Some are so

shocked they never come back. But most of them return, week after week.

"It feels like we're a family," says Toto after a while to Valeriu.

At the Club, the children also get to draw, play music and do drama. A dancer from a famous street dance crew teaches them hip-hop styles like locking and popping. It's hard to keep up at first, but Toto works really hard, both at home and during the dance sessions. While the others lose the tempo, Toto listens to the beats and in the end can copy the teacher's movements perfectly.

Starts school

Toto starts school as well, but he is often late to class. Ana is back on drugs, so Andrea doesn't want to stay at home. She sleeps over at friends' houses and Toto often lies awake at night because he feels lonely and afraid.

"Sorry for being late, miss,"

he says when he arrives at the classroom one morning.

The teacher is used to it and asks how he is doing.

"I couldn't get up. . . I was dead tired, miss . . . I didn't sleep at all."

Before Valeriu and the Education Club started working at the school, most teachers knew nothing about the children's lives in Ferentari. When they turned up late or fell asleep during lessons, they were told off and punished. Many children left school because they were so unhappy. But now Valeriu explains the situation to the teachers and they understand that the children try to do their best. Toto's teacher pats him on the arm and gives him a piece of paper with clocks, asking him to write the time they show under each one.

"You work it out," she says kindly. "Don't rush this time."

Police take Ana

Toto is at school when the police turn up at his home and bang on the door. They shout:

"Police! Open up!" Then they break down the door and rush in.

"Everybody get down! Down!"

Ana and the others throw themselves down on the floor. The police put handcuffs on them, shove them down the stairs and into a car outside.

When Andrea comes home, a man is sitting inside on his own.

"Your sister got arrested," he says.

Andrea and Toto are now left on their own. Ana has to stay in prison for a while. The police try to get her to say she has sold drugs but she refuses. Late one evening, she is released and comes home.

"Will you start doing drugs again?" asks Andrea anxiously. Toto gives Ana a hug.

"Welcome back, Ana," he says, and suddenly starts cry-



Toto and his sister Andrea don't like it at the children's home at first, but after a while they feel more at home.



At the *Alternative Education Club*, Toto learns to read and write for the first time.



When Toto's big sister Ana, 17, gets sick, she doesn't have the energy to either clean or look after herself.



Toto, 17

- Favourite things:** Drama and making films.
- Worst things:** Racism. Injustice.
- Misses:** My family.
- Trusts:** My friends.
- Sad:** When I miss my family.
- Dream job:** Actor.
- Looks up to:** Valeriu. He's like a dad to all of us.

ing. "How did you get out?"
 "Stop crying. . . I won't do drugs anymore," says Ana. She promises that no one will take drugs in the flat again, and that she will take care of Toto. She looks tired and her clothes are hanging off her skinny body.

"Why have you lost so much weight?" asks Andrea.

"I eat what I can," is Ana's curt response.

Dreams of a job

Ana wants to work as a chef and gets help from the Education Club to apply for a place on a professional course. She gets an interview and the woman from the school asks how old she is.

"17."

"You're underage, we need one of your parents to be present."

"My mum's in jail."

"I see. And your father?"

"He doesn't care about me," says Ana, who hasn't had any contact with her dad.

"To take this course you need a parent's consent, OK," says the woman apologetically.

Ana goes home, sad and disappointed. Soon she starts taking drugs again.

Moving to a children's home

Valeriu thinks it's too dangerous for Toto and Andrea to live at home any longer, and that they should move to the children's home in Ferentari. Andrea doesn't want to. She remembers the last time she and Ana lived in a children's home, before Toto was born. She felt awful that mum didn't want them anymore. It was Uncle Sile who got mum to take them back home.

When Andrea talks to her teacher at the Education Club about it, she starts crying. Crying won't solve anything, says the teacher.

"Be strong. Be stubborn. That's how our lives work. Do you understand?"

"I do," says Andrea, and gets a big hug from the teacher.

Andrea and Toto move to the children's home. It is run down and there are lots of rules, but they get food every day and no one takes drugs or shouts at them. After a while, Toto starts to feel at home. Ana comes and visits sometimes. She borrows the shower and changes her clothes. Every time she looks thinner and more tired.

Ana is sick

When Ana suddenly stops visiting the children's home, Andrea goes to the flat, which is dirty and untidy. Ana doesn't have the energy to do anything. She just lies in bed. She cries and says her siblings have abandoned her.

"We left because we couldn't live like this anymore. . . ." explains Andrea. She reminds Ana that when she came out of prison she promised to start school and work.

"None of that happened. Don't you want to go the hospital at least?"

Ana finally goes to the children's home with Andrea. She talks to an adviser there, and Andrea listens to them behind the door. The adviser asks Ana when she started taking drugs.

"I was 13," she replies.

After they talk some more, the adviser rustles her papers and says:

"Your test results came back. And unfortunately you are HIV positive."

Andrea is sad, but not surprised. Toto is too young to understand, but she has suspected for a long time that Ana was sick. HIV spreads easily when drug abusers share needles. HIV is not fatal. There is effective treatment available and it helps to lead a healthy life. But life is so hard in Ferentari that HIV often quickly develops into the deadly illness AIDS.

Toto competes

The dance teacher at the club has entered Toto into a big hip-hop dance competition.





Toto is making his own film about life in Ferentari.



The poster for the movie about Toto's life, *Toto and His Sisters*, hangs on the wall at home.

➤ The judges come from Italy, Denmark and the US. Toto is nervous and fiddles with the number attached to one of his trouser legs, 227. Suddenly they call him from the stage: "Time for the last dancer in the popping final, number 227!"

The spotlights shine right into Toto's eyes. He can't see the audience, but he knows that Valeriu, the dance teacher and his friends are there. The music starts, and Toto moves with short, rolling movements. He tightens and relaxes his muscles, so it looks like his body is shaking from electric shocks. And he wins a prize – second place! His friends cheer while Toto stands on the podium and gets a medal round his neck.

"Well done, kid! You're a born champion, hear me?" says the dance teacher after-

wards. "You're the best. Don't you forget it . . ."

Keen to help others

Toto is now 17. He and Andrea stayed on at school. Ana is still struggling with her illness. Mum is out of prison, but they rarely meet. Toto lives in a group home in Ferentari with six other boys who can't live with their families either.

"It's OK here," he says. "But I miss my family sometimes and then I get sad."

There's a poster on the wall for the film *Toto and His Sisters*. It's about Toto's life in Ferentari and was made by a famous film director with the help of Valeriu and others from the *Alternative Education Club*.

"At first it was weird having someone sitting in a corner filming everything we did, but

after a while I didn't think about it anymore."

Toto and His Sisters has been shown at film festivals all over the world and has won many awards and rave reviews.

"It feels strange to sit in a dark cinema and hear people crying when they see bits of my life. It made me understand more about what I've been through. Afterwards, people often ask questions and ask for my autograph. Then I usually ask them to write their names too and a message on my shirt, as a memento. I've got three shirts like that at home now, covered in messages!"

Own film

Toto is now making his own film about Ferentari.

"People think that all the people who live in Ferentari are thieves, that we're too lazy to work, that we only want to

take drugs and like living surrounded by dirt and rubbish. But it's not true. Of course drug users want to stop, but it's really hard. People do want things to be clean and tidy, but there's nowhere to get rid of the rubbish. In the end they just give up."

Toto says that most people want to work, but that no one wants to employ people who live in Ferentari.

"It's happened to my friends, even to those that left school with top grades. It's especially hard if you're dark, because there's a lot of racism aimed at us Roma."

Toto thinks people should visit Ferentari and see how it is with their own eyes.

"Talk to us instead of listening to lies and prejudice. We're people just like you." 🌐

Toto still dances, but mostly for fun. Today he's more interested in acting, drama and making films.





Toto and his friends in the Playhood theatre group.



Many people recognise Toto at the theatre festivals from the film, and ask for autographs. Then he asks them to write a message on his shirt as a memento. He has three full shirts at home now!



Playhood's new play *Home* premiered at Romania's biggest theatre festival.

Theatre for life

When Toto and his friends premiere his new play at Romania's biggest annual theatre festival, people stand up in the auditorium and applaud. Some are wiping tears from their eyes.

Toto started doing drama with other youngsters at the *Alternative Education Club* in Ferentari. With the help of Ionut, a professional actor, they started writing their own plays inspired by their lives in Ferentari. Last year they formed the theatre group *Playhood*.

"The new play is called *Home*," says Toto. It's about four teenagers at a juvenile detention centre.

In a series of brief scenes, the play tells us how the boys end-

ed up in prison. It's about poverty, parents unable to take care of them, lack of education and, of course, silly mistakes and making the wrong choices.

"It's also about dreams," says Toto. "About the fact that everyone has dreams that they're trying to achieve." The leader Ionut nods and says that the play shows how important it is to accept and trust one another. That lots of people have to work together to achieve their goals, even if the odds are against them.

Ionut doesn't come from Ferentari himself. He often encounters prejudice about the area and the young people living there.

"Some people ask me: 'How can you work with those people?' But most are positive, although they are surprised when they see teenagers acting out scenes about drugs, teenage pregnancies, racism and discrimination. Sometimes they ask whether the young people can really understand such things.

We know they do."

Importance of humour

"We tackle lots of difficult things, but we always use humour too," says Toto. "We're teenagers after all, so it shouldn't be too serious. I think people learn a lot from watching our plays. I can also see that they're happy for our sake, and their happiness and compassion makes me happy too." 🌐





In other parts of the city of Bucharest, it's quite common to see graffiti containing bad words and prejudices aimed at Roma, for example. But in Ferentari, the children have painted their own graffiti wall with hearts and bright colours.

There aren't many places to play in Ferentari. Many areas of the neighbourhood have been taken over by homeless people and drug users. But the children still manage to find ways of having fun and getting some exercise.

Street games

French skipping

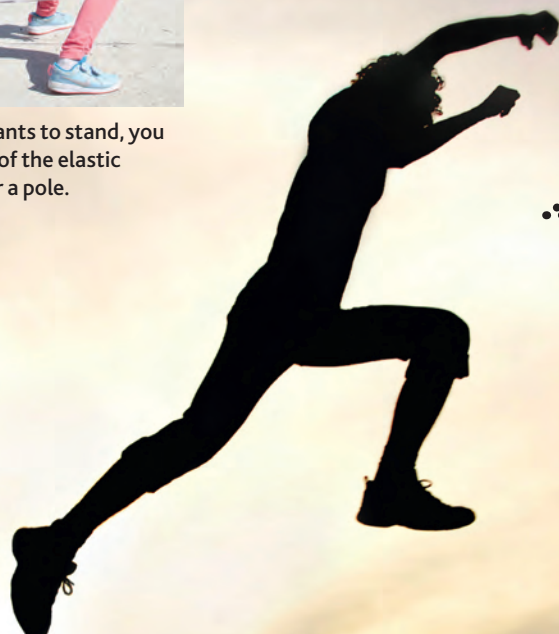
"All you need for French skipping is some elastic and bouncy feet," explains Zana, 12. Tie the elastic to make a ring. Two people stand inside and stretch the elastic round their legs or body. The person whose go it is jumps in and out in different ways. If you manage to do a movement, the elastic is moved higher up, for example from the knees to the waist, or just under the armpits.



The elastic is moved higher and higher every time you do a movement. The higher it goes, the harder it gets of course!



Tip! If no one wants to stand, you can tie one end of the elastic round a fence or a pole.



What's parkour?

The parkour and freerunning movement started in a suburb of Paris in France, and quickly became popular in high-rise areas where children and young people didn't have access to nice play areas or big gymnasiums with advanced equipment. Just like skateboarders, who use the street environment, people who do parkour move freely around the city jungle. They do tricks, run and jump on roofs and park benches, asphalt and high walls. The idea is to get about as efficiently, smoothly and quickly as possible, negotiating obstacles and solving problems on the way. Parkour and freerunning is now practised all over the world. Many combine it with acrobatics, climbing and balance training. Give it a go, but be careful!



Ionut grew up in Ferentari.
"The worst thing is when people in the area get into fights."



Asphalt as a gym floor

Ionut, 18, has been doing parkour and acrobatics for several years together with his friends in Ferentari.

"We learn from one another and by watching YouTube videos," he says. "Sometimes we film ourselves using our mobiles and upload tricks, so others can see what we're up to."

Ionut likes parkour and acrobatics, but in the future he would rather be a singer, perhaps a big star like Justin Bieber.

"I'm happiest when I'm singing," he says.



Your body is your equipment in Ferentari, which doesn't have any advanced gymnasiums.



"It takes time to learn stuff."
You have to expect to get it wrong loads of times!"

Wilderness between the high-rises

Rica, 13, was born and grew up in a wild, green area, criss-crossed by narrow rivers, just outside the city of Bucharest.

Long before Rica was born, his dad Gica left the poverty of rural Romania and moved to Bucharest with his horse and cart. As he was entering the city, he noticed an area of wilderness that lay hidden behind the grey concrete. He built a little house for his family and moved in.

City expands

As the city grew, the grey high-rises came closer. Suddenly there was rubbish in the water and the grass. Old tyres, plastic bags, cardboard boxes and cans, even a fridge. Many blamed the rubbish on the Roma families that were living in the park. But actually it was the people in the city who thought it was convenient to chuck their rubbish in the area of wilderness.

Area becomes a park

One day, the area was discovered by a group of environmental activists. They are

overjoyed to find that 100 different species of birds and animals, including turtles and otters, were living so close to the city. But the area was under threat from poaching, illegal fishing and rubbish. After four years, the environmental activists managed to get the Romanian government to turn the area into a protected park. Lots of people now wanted the Roma families to move out. Gica refused.

"I'll never leave my home," he said.

In the end, the environmental activists realised that Gica could help them and they made him a forest warden. He is the only one who can live in the park now, and protect the animals and their natural habitat.

"Mum and all the children and grand children sleep in a flat in town," explains Rica. "But we visit dad every day. When I'm there, I miss things like running water and heating. But in town I miss the peace and tranquillity of nature." 🌍

9:00 a.m Good morning!

"We get up much earlier on school days, but on the weekend we get a lie-in," says Rica. His big sister never got to go to school. She got married and had children when she was a teenager.

"Things are different now," she says. "My daughter and my younger siblings will go to school first."



9:30 a.m To Ferentari

Today it's homework help and then football at the Alternative Education Club in Ferentari.



Artificial area gone wild

It was Romania's former dictator Ceaucescu who wanted to build an artificial lake in the area where the park is now located. The dictator was killed in the 1989 revolution, and the half-finished project was forgotten. But the water spread of its own accord and turned into a vast water delta. Wild animals were drawn here, and rare plants and

flowers began to grow. Some businessmen wanted to build high-rise flats and factories on the land. Some say that people set fire to the forest to destroy the area so they could build. But the wilderness was turned into a protected park instead.



Rica, 13

Lives in: A flat in Bucharest and in Vacaresti Park.

Likes: Football and music.
Loves: My family, our dogs and cats.

Wants to be: A forest warden like dad.



10.00 a.m Homework help

"When we first started coming to the Club, we'd never been to school before," says Rica. "Valeriu and the other adults did all they could to teach us to read and write, but it was difficult. Now it's going better. I learn something new every day."

1:00 p.m Time for football

"After homework help, everyone runs to the sports hall. There's football training for girls and boys."



3:00 p.m To the wilderness

Rica and his siblings take the bus and walk through the city to get to the wilderness. The last part of the journey is by the family's boat. It's got caught up in the reeds!



4:00 p.m Finally home

The house that Rica's dad built all those years ago has been patched up and fixed many times.



Still rubbish lying around

After all the years Bucharest's inhabitants spent throwing their rubbish in the park, it's going to take a long time to clean up. But Rica's mum does what she can.





4:30 p.m Fetching water

The park has a well with clean water. Rica's younger brothers fetch water for Gica, who is getting older.



5:00 p.m Checking the pigeons

Rica sees to his pigeons and feeds them corn and sunflower seeds. He and his dad have some 60 pigeons, and sometimes they let them out. "They always come back, unless they get caught by a hawk."



"We have three dogs and ten cats. Some of them have been best friends since they were little. I miss our dog Leo, who was run over by a car when he ran out of the park."

The rabbit doesn't like being picked up!



5:30 p.m Chopping wood

Rica fixes wood for dad's fire, so he can keep warm at night.



6:30 p.m Evening football game

Valeriu comes to visit in the park and plays an evening game of football.



8:00 p.m TV time

When Rica gets back into town, he puts on the TV, although he prefers listening to music. Soon it's bedtime, and then he longs for the silence of the wilderness.



Dario longs for home

Dario was four when he moved to a children's home for the first time. At the time, his family was living in a little wooden shack built right on the pavement, with no heating, toilet or running water.

Dario's mum tried to look after her children, clean and make the place look nice. But it was difficult when nine people were squashed together in one room. Dario's dad was no help. He drank, took drugs and even beat his mum. Sometimes rats, spiders and other animals got in through cracks in the walls and roof. In the end, the youngest children had to move into a state children's home in Ferentari: a grey, square building behind a high fence.

"It was horrible," recalls Dario. "We never got to go out and play. It felt like a prison. Everyone was angry, particularly one woman with glasses.

She was always shouting at me when I ran in the corridor or talked too loudly. I was really scared of her. Some of the children escaped, climbed over the fence and disappeared. But I didn't dare."

Wanted to go home

Dario missed his mum and cried every day.

"I was always asking when mum would pick me up, and every day the adults at the children's home said: 'She's coming tomorrow'. They lied to stop me crying, but it would have been better if they'd told me the truth. I just got more disappointed and sad."

Sometimes Dario's mum visited the children's home

with sweets and biscuits.

"She knew how horrible it was and didn't want to leave us there. She used to ask to borrow the shower, because we didn't have a bathroom at home."

After a while, Dario and his siblings were moved to another children's home in

Ferentari, which was more of a daycare centre. It meant the children could go home sometimes, like on weekends and holidays.

The state children's home in Ferentari is surrounded by high fencing.





Dario, 12

Lives in: A children's home in Ferentari.
Loves: My family. My dog Poofy.
Likes: School, drawing, football, drama.
Misses: My mum.
Sad: When I see all the abandoned dogs in Ferentari.
Looks up to: Valeriu. He has a big heart.

“It was a thousand times better,” says Dario. “The adults there were kinder and we were allowed to play out in the yard. Sometimes I took food from there and gave it to mum.”

The club helps

When Dario started school, he went to the *Alternative Education Club* every afternoon and on weekends. It was there that he met Valeriu, who helped him with his homework and took him to football training.

“The adults at the Education Club gave us lots of time and were good at explaining things. It helped me catch up in school. I even won a prize for being one of the best pupils in the class! But suddenly my hearing got bad. I had always suffered from ear infections since I was little. Sometimes there was gooey yellow stuff coming out of my ear. Valeriu took me to the doctor, who said I might go deaf.”

Lots of children in Ferentari

On the weekends, Dario sometimes stays with his sister Lacrima and her children.

“I'd like to live here all the time, but they only have a small place so there wouldn't be room.”

get sick from dirty water and infections. Some have even lost their hearing or their sight because of illnesses that could easily have been treated with medicine. But many parents are afraid that the authorities will take their children from them if they ask for help. It's happened to several families. Some doctors also demand extra payment on top of the usual fee for medicine and health care, even though it's illegal to do that. Parents from Ferentari are poor and can't afford to pay any extra.

When Dario started complaining about his hearing at the Education Club, Valeriu



Dario gets help with his homework at the *Alternative Education Club* and is now one of the best pupils in the class.



Football is the best thing, according to Dario. His favourite player is called Messi.

realised they needed to act fast. Dario finally got to see a doctor and after a lot of nagging from Valeriu, the hospital agreed to operate. His hearing was saved.

“I managed to get it done because I happen to know the right people and I know how to go about things,” says Valeriu. “If Dario’s mum had tried to get him an operation, it would never have happened. It makes me angry that families in Ferentari don’t get the same care and help as others.”

Mum falls ill

One day when mum came to visit the children’s home she looked unusually grey and thin.

“Mum said she was ill and couldn’t come and visit as often. She’d put a scarf round her head, because her hair had started falling out,” says Dario. “By the time the family had a party together on New Year’s Eve, she’d lost all her hair. But she was still happy, because everyone was there together, listening to music and having fun. I didn’t sleep a wink that night!”

A few weeks later, Dario was on his way to the children’s home from football training.

“It had been a good session and I was happy. When I went passed the carwash where my dad works, he saw me and waved for me to come over.

‘Your mum is dead’, he said. I was so sad. I wish I’d found out in a better way.”

Wishes for a time machine

“I wish I had a time machine, so I could go back and make everything better. Not just in Ferentari, but in the whole world. If I got to decide, no child would have to live at a children’s home. They’d be with their families instead. I would get rid of all the rubbish and drugs, so people would be nicer to one another. Maybe I can do that when I’m older and do the same thing that Valeriu does, to make life better for children.”

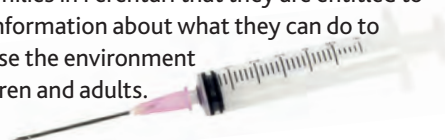


Dario’s favourite toy is called Kendama and it comes from Japan. It was invented hundreds of years ago in Japan and consists of a wooden ball on the end of a string with three cups and a spike. The aim of the game is to catch the wooden ball on the spike or in one of the cups. After lots of practice, Dario is now an expert!



District making children ill

Dario was in danger of losing his hearing after suffering from lots of untreated ear infections. Many of Ferentari’s children get very ill because they are undernourished and get lots of infections, which are made worse by the piles of rubbish and dirty wastewater on the streets. A lot of the children have a constant cough and difficulty breathing because of asthma and the lung disease tuberculosis. Others accidentally prick themselves on needles discarded by drug abusers, and they become infected with hepatitis or HIV. Ferentari used to have health centres, but they closed a long time ago and it’s a long way to the nearest doctor’s surgery. Many parents don’t ask for help because they’re afraid that the authorities will take their children away. It’s happened to several families. And most don’t know that children in Romania are entitled to free health care. Some doctors try to cheat people and demand money for treatment. Valeriu and the *Alternative Education Club* explain to the families in Ferentari that they are entitled to health care and medical treatment, and give them information about what they can do to stay healthy. But Valeriu says it’s not enough, because the environment in Ferentari is dangerous for the health of both children and adults.



"Welcome to the World's Children's Press Conference, which is held at the same time by children in many different countries! We must get parents to realise that it is their duty to allow their children to go to school," says WCP Child Rights Ambassador Bonebana at the Children's Press Conference in Bunia, DR Congo.

Make your voices heard!

Welcome to the World's Children's Prize Press Conference, which is being held simultaneously by children in many countries! On the same day all over the world, children reveal which of the three nominees has been chosen by millions of voting children to receive the *World's Children's Prize for the Rights of the Child*, and which two will receive the *World's Children's Honorary Award*.

Invite the media to your own World's Children's Press Conference. Talk about improvements in respect for the rights of the child that you would like to see. Only children should speak and be interviewed by journalists at the press conferences, which are held by children all over the world at the same time.

How to do it:

1. Time and place

If possible, choose the most important building in your area for your press conference to show that the rights of the

child are important! Holding it at your school is fine too. (Keep an eye on the WCP website to find out the exact date in spring 2018.)

2. Invite the media

Invite local newspapers, magazines and TV and radio stations in advance. Write the time and place clearly. Using email is good, but make sure you also call journalists you want to come! Remind them by telephone or by visiting them the day before the press conference.

3. Prepare

Write down what you want to say about WCP, and the changes you want to see in connection with the rights of the child in your country. Shortly before the press conference you will receive secret information about the Child Rights Heroes from the World's Children's Prize, which you will reveal at the press conference.

4. Hold the press conference

If possible, begin with music and dancing, and explain that other children all over the world are holding press confer-

ences at the same time. Then proceed with the press conference roughly as follows:

- State facts about the WCP and show a short WCP information film.
- Explain how you think children's rights are violated where you live in your country.
- Place demands on politicians and other adults to respect the rights of the child.
- Reveal the 'big news' of the day, about the Child Rights Heroes.
- Share press releases and a WCP fact sheet on your country.

At a Children's Press Conference in Bukavu in DR Congo, the Child Rights Ambassadors reported violations of the rights of the child and revealed who had received the most votes in the Global Vote.

At worldschildrensprize.org you'll find:

- Press releases, child rights fact sheets for your country
- Advice on how to invite journalists and questions for politicians.
- Films about WCP, the Global Vote and the Child Rights Heroes
- Press images for the media.

Are there several schools in your area? Hold a joint press conference with one representative from each school on stage.



WCP radio across Congo

Several Children's Press Conferences are held every year in DR Congo; a country where many children are subjected to serious violations of their rights. The children leading the press conferences bring up these violations, demand respect for the rights of the child and talk about their heroes. The news spreads far and wide, mainly via several radio stations, which are listened to by lots of people in Congo.



"The child rights education programme has opened my eyes to how the rights of the child are violated here in Bunia. We Child Rights Ambassadors are going to change things, so that the rights of the child are respected in Ituri."

Adegitho, WCP Child Rights Ambassador, Nelson Mandela School, DR Congo, at the Children's Press Conference.



"I demand that the government and school officials respect the rights of the child."

Safari, WCP Child Rights Ambassador, Fabia School, DR Congo, at the Children's Press Conference.

We are patrons of the World's Children's Prize



Sweden's Minister for Children, Åsa Regnér, became a new Honorary Adult Friend and patron of the World's Children's Prize at the WCP Award Ceremony in 2017.



Queen Silvia



Desmond Tutu



Stefan Löfven



Nelson Mandela



Graça Machel



Malala Yousafzai

Malala Yousafzai and Sweden's Minister for Children, Åsa Regnér, are both proud new Honorary Adult Friends and patrons of the World's Children's Prize.

"You can count on me and on the Swedish Government," says the Swedish Minister.

Anyone who has done something good for the rights of the child or the World's Children's Prize can be an Honorary Adult Friend and patron of WCP. WCP patrons include global legends such as Malala Yousafzai, the late Nelson Mandela and Xanana Gusmão. Sweden's Queen Silvia was WCP's first patron. Other patrons include Sweden's Prime Minister Stefan Löfven, Sweden's Minister for Children Åsa Regnér and the global leaders of The Elders, Graça Machel and Desmond Tutu.

In 2014, millions of children voted for Malala Yousafzai to receive the World's Children's Prize. Malala also now supports the World's Children's Prize as a patron.

Count on me

"I am very happy to accept this honorary task as patron of the World's Children's Prize. As a Minister for Children, I am very

proud to be involved in this global work that involves girls and boys directly. When you are given this task of being a patron of the World's Children's Prize, you have to work hard and you have to take action" says Åsa Regnér.

"With millions of children taking part annually, the World's Children's Prize Program is the world's largest annual educational initiative for equality, children's rights and democracy. And knowledge is the foundation for change. Now that we have

been so involved, the Swedish Government really has to do something. We will incorporate the Convention on the Rights of the Child into Swedish legislation.

"You can count on me and you can count on the Swedish Government! I am so honoured," says the Minister.



View films from the WCP ceremony at worldschildrensprize.org/wcpceremony2017



During the finishing song *A World of Friends*, the members of the Child Jury are joined on stage by children from Gripsholm School in Mariefred, the singing group Format from Stockholm and the band Abatsha from Cape Town, South Africa.



We're celebrating the rights of the child!

The annual World's Children's Prize Award Ceremony is led by the Child Jury at Gripsholm Castle in Mariefred in Sweden. All three Child Rights Heroes are honoured and awarded prize money for their work for children. Sweden's Queen Silvia helps the members of the Child Jury present the prizes.



Emma from Canada spoke about all the more than 40 million children who have taken part in the WCP program since 2000.



Manuel Rodrigues, who is blind and from Guinea-Bissau, was awarded the voting children's *World's Children's Prize for the Rights of the Child*. He was accompanied by Isabel, one of the children he has helped.



Rosi Gollmann, 90, from Germany, who has been fighting for children's rights for over 50 years, was presented with a *World's Children's Honorary Award* by Queen Silvia.



Queen Silvia presented a *World's Children's Honorary Award* to Molly Melching, USA and Senegal, who has devoted 40 years to fighting for girls' rights in West Africa.



The Child Jury together with Child Rights Hero Molly Melching, Mariama, Minister for Children Åsa Regnér, Queen Silvia, Child Rights Hero Manuel Rodrigues, Child Rights Hero Rosi Gollmann and Ananthi.



There's hardly any part of the world that isn't affected by litter – on the ground and in lakes and seas. If we don't do anything about it, our oceans could end up containing more plastic than fish by the year 2050! But you and other children and young people around the world can make a difference and become the No Litter Generation.

On 16 May, you can get involved in No Litter Day and pick up litter on your street, in your village or your neighbourhood. Then report back to us and tell us the weight of all the litter you and your school have collected together at worldschildrensprize.org/nolitter

Litter is stuff that ends up on the ground or in lakes and seas, and that shouldn't be there. It could be glass bottles, plastic bags, tins, cigarette butts or sweet wrappers. Both animals and people can injure themselves because of litter. Some litter also contains hazardous substances that should not leak out into the environment.

Different countries – different challenges

Many countries lack good systems for handling and sorting waste. Most of it is thrown onto the streets or in open rubbish tips. And there are no recycling systems. If we don't try and make use of what we throw away, we're wasting the Earth's resources, because lots of materials could be used several times.

When waste and litter is just chucked out without any controls, it can cause health risks. Illnesses can spread if people come into contact with human



A partnership between
World's Children's Prize Foundation
and Keep Sweden Tidy

waste and needles, for example. The waste may even contain hazardous chemicals. A lot of litter and waste can blow off the streets and from open rubbish tips, ending up in lakes and seas.

Other countries have good systems for collecting and recycling waste. But they often face other challenges, like people not using the systems properly or buying things unnecessarily, creating more waste and litter. So different countries face different challenges.

Example: India

Many parts of India lack systems for managing waste, but 11 districts in the state of Tamil Nadu have introduced a great system. The families in these districts sort their waste into three containers.

Food waste is placed in a green basket. It's collected for compost, which becomes soil or is used to make biogas. →





25 million elephants-worth of plastic in the oceans

There could already be 150 million tonnes of plastic litter in the world's oceans. That's the same weight as 25 million large elephants. If that many elephants stood in a line with their trunks outstretched, the line would be 200,000 km long. It would go round the world five times.

→ Material that can be recycled or reused, such as plastic bottles and paper, is placed in a white bag. The material is sorted, sold and then used again in various ways. Anything that can't be composted or recycled is placed in a black basket. This waste is collected, taken to landfill or stored in some other safe way.

In Tamil Nadu they are also trying to make sure that less waste is produced in the first place. For example, Little Flower school has made the entire school area a plastic-free zone, and there are signs up reminding visitors about the ban.

Example: Sweden

Sweden has a system for managing and recycling waste. Old newspapers are collected and used to make new paper. Metal cans and glass bottles are melted down and the material is used to make new bottles and cans. Some plastic is used to make new plastic.

Whatever cannot be used again is incinerated at special facilities, where the exhaust fumes are cleaned and the heat is used to heat up water for lots of houses. Any waste that cannot be recycled or incinerated is taken to special

rubbish tips where it causes the least possible damage to the environment.

But lots of people in Sweden don't bother sorting their rubbish, or they don't sort it properly. Material that should be recycled ends up in the ordinary rubbish, and a large amount of it ends up just as litter on the ground. And Sweden produces a lot of waste because people there buy lots of stuff and packaging that is only used once. In order to turn things around, we need to change our behaviour.

Litter costs money

It's hard to work out how much littering costs all around the world. Many countries invest lots of resources in cleaning and picking up litter. Littering can for example mean that tourists stop visiting an area, which leads to less money coming into a country. The more litter that ends up on the ground or in our oceans, the greater the consequences and costs. It's cheaper to deal with the litter proper-

ly right from the start. A lot of what ends up as litter can also be used again.

Litter can harm animals

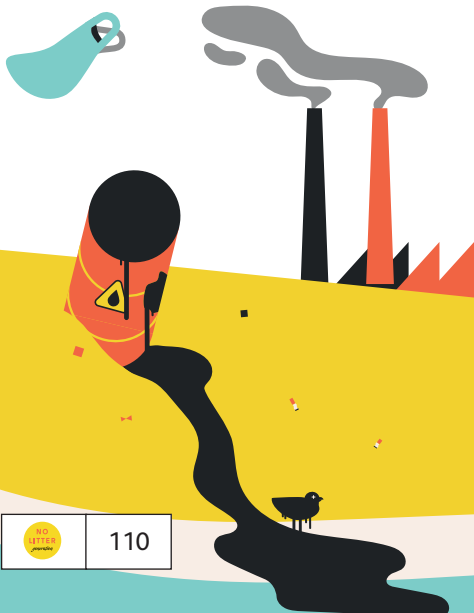
Many animals are injured by litter. They can hurt themselves on it, get stuck or even end up eating it. Animals that swallow bits of plastic can starve to death or gradually get weaker as their stomachs fill with plastic instead of food. Both large and small animals can be injured

More plastic than fish ...

Lots of plastic litter ends up in the world's oceans. It can travel long distances on the wind or in rivers and rainwater. If we don't do something about this, by 2050 there could be more plastic than fish in the world's oceans!

Whale swallowed 30 plastic bags

- 8 million tonnes of plastic end up in our oceans every year.
- The plastic injures over 600 species of animals that live in and by the sea.
- 99 percent of all seabirds will have eaten plastic by the year 2050 if this development continues.
- A stranded whale in Norway had 30 plastic bags in its stomach.



4,500 billion cigarette butts reach the moon and back 117 times

In the whole world, around 4,500 billion cigarette butts are chucked on the ground every year! If you line up all these cigarette butts, the line would be 90,000,000 kilometres long. That's as far as travelling to and from the moon 117 times. It takes about three years for a cigarette butt to break down to such tiny pieces that it can't be seen. But even tiny pieces can do damage.



by litter, for example whales, turtles, fish, birds, clams and cows.

Plastic doesn't go away

Plastic that ends up on the ground or in the sea breaks down into tiny pieces very, very slowly. This can take hundreds or thousands of years. Even really tiny bits of plastic (microplastics) can cause harm. Microplastics can be eaten by small organisms like animal plankton and clams. When these organisms are then eaten by larger animals, the plastic carries on up the food chain. In the end, the plastic may end up in the fish you eat for dinner. Researchers are trying to find out more about how animals and people are affected by eating microplastics.

Working for change

Many children and adults all over the world are campaigning to reduce littering.

- More countries have introduced bans on, or increased the price of plastic bags, because they do damage. Rwanda in Africa was the first country in the world to introduce a ban on plastic bags.
- Many countries are working to make it easy to do the right thing, for example by putting out more rubbish bins with lids, so the waste doesn't blow away, and improving recycling systems.
- Producers – the companies that make plastic packaging – are being encouraged to develop smarter packaging that doesn't end up as litter.
- Many countries have annual litter picking campaigns, like No Litter Day, when both adults and children pick litter and learn more about the consequences of littering.
- Countries are also working together to solve the problem of littering. In 2015, all countries in the UN adopted 17 global goals for economically, socially and environmentally sustainable development. The goals are to be

achieved by 2030, which will only be possible if everyone does their bit. Recycling, dealing with waste and not littering will help achieve the goals.

No Litter Day

On 16 May, or another day in that week, children in lots of different countries will come together to pick up litter at their school, where they live or in their village. These children belong to the No Litter Generation. They are changing things for a better world, and on this day in particular for a cleaner, healthier world. They will sort and weigh the litter they collect on No Litter Day. Then they will report what has been collected and the total weight either to a contact person in their country or to the No Litter-scales at worldschildrensprize.org/nolitter.



Waste sorting at St. K Michael School in Accra, which is part of Eco-Schools Ghana.



What can we make out of litter?



Recycled glass is often made into bottles or drinking glasses, but it's also used in a special kind of asphalt for roads. Paper and cardboard is made into newspapers, tissues, writing paper and egg boxes. Steel and tin can be made into steel wire and building materials, tins, works of art, chairs and tables. Recycled wood can be transformed into bins, toys, play equipment and furniture. Plastic PET bottles can be melted down and used to make blankets, cushions, fleece tops and as insulation in warm coats and sleeping bags. It takes 10 bottles to produce enough fibre for a T-shirt, and 63 bottles for a fleece top. Have you got any more suggestions for what can be made using litter?



→ This is how you and your friends can join the No Litter Generation:

1. Study and discuss the content of this No Litter magazine.
2. Talk about how the place where you live can be litter-free.
3. Take the No Litter magazine home to your family, friends and neighbours. Share what you've learned and talk to them about how they can help keep your street or village litter-free.
4. Hold your own No Litter Day and pick, sort and weigh the litter you've collected. Be careful not to hurt yourself on the litter and get help from an adult if you find something that is sharp or dangerous in some other way.
5. Report what you have collected and the total weight of the litter.
6. Make sure all the litter is recycled or ends up somewhere where it can be stored safely.
7. Celebrate your efforts!

Best and worst thing about waste

The best thing would be if there wasn't any waste in the first place. Maybe we could use less packaging?

- Any waste that is still produced should ideally be reused or recycled. Then our stuff and materials could be useful again and it would help save the Earth's resources.
- If that's not possible, the waste should be incinerated or taken to a rubbish tip. But we need to do it properly, so we don't contaminate the air, ground or water.
- The worst thing is if waste ends up as litter on the ground or in rivers, lakes and seas.

THINGS FOR YOU AND YOUR FRIENDS IN THE NO LITTER GENERATION TO DO

LOOK AT WHERE YOU LIVE:

- Do you have good systems for dealing with waste?
- What problems are there when it comes to waste and litter?

MAKE SUGGESTIONS AND CHANGES:

- What suggestions do you have to tackle littering?
- What suggestions do you have for solutions to deal with waste and litter?
- Who makes the decisions about the waste system where you live? Meet the people who are in charge and share your suggestions.
- Tell everyone where you live about why littering is bad. Encourage them to help create a litter-free school, street and village, and offer tips on how to do it.
- Plan how the No Litter Generation can work to reduce littering even when it's not No Litter Day.
- Collect ideas on how to reuse litter.
- And of course, don't drop any litter yourself!



Watch the No Litter Generation film at worldschildrensprize.org/nolitter.



The children at the brick kiln in Pakistan are part of the No Litter Generation, as it says in Urdu on the right.

PHOTO: ALI HAIDER

Litter is everyone's responsibility

For the majority of human history, litter has not been a big problem. Most of it was organic, food and kitchen waste, which decomposed and went back into the earth.

The problems began as cities grew in size and we gained practical new materials such as plastic. It was handy to be able to store food and other stuff in secure containers. However, this has generated much more waste on the planet that doesn't break down by itself. Consequently, many countries have built up systems for handling litter. Many poor countries have invested money in other things. In addition, many rich countries, sometimes illegally, send much of their most hazardous waste off to poor countries. This includes car tyres made of toxic rubber and electrical waste made up of mobile phones and computers. But this is no longer an option. The mountains of waste are growing too quickly.

More wealth, the more waste
The richer you are, particularly if you live in a city, the more waste and litter you create.

The USA and Japan are among the countries that create the most waste, but they can afford to take care of it, so it is less visible on the streets than in poorer countries, which generate the very least waste. Waste collection systems are rare there and people throw their rubbish out on the streets. Disease is a common problem. But the situation could be even worse if not for the fact that one quarter of all the millions of tons of waste and litter created every day is collected by poor people who are garbage pickers.

Garbage pickers essential
Sidra in Pakistan is one of roughly 15 million people around the world who pick garbage in order to survive. She and Nisha, who comes from a brick-worker family, are both keen to be part of the No Litter Generation and take part in No Litter Day. They live in a country with no functioning waste management

systems. People with money throw stuff away and the very poorest collect it, sort it and sell it or exchange it for things they need. Sidra's family have been picking litter for generations and are experts at recycling and reuse. But it is a tough and hazardous job that pays very little money.

Successful protests

It is unfair that some people keep generating litter, while others must pick litter just because they are poor. Keeping things clean and taking care of litter is an important job. Children should not have to work at all, they should be going to school. Garbage pickers throughout the world have now begun protesting, as in the Indian city of Pune. And the politicians have actually listened! They have promised to pay the garbage pickers, mostly women, for their work. The women started up a cleaning company and now they have salaries,

good working conditions and protective clothing. They work shorter hours, but are paid more. But the best thing is that their children have stopped picking litter and now go to school instead.

Helping one another

It is the responsibility of everyone to ensure that people everywhere, especially children, get to live in a safe and healthy environment. We can help one another to pick litter and spread knowledge about the environment. But world leaders must also keep their promise: to fight to achieve the UN's Global Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 and eradicate extreme poverty, reduce inequality and injustice and resolve the climate crisis. Then children like Nisha and Sidra will be able to choose for themselves what work they want to do when they grow up.



Nisha, 12
Class 5, BRIC school

Nisha and Sidra are part of

Every afternoon when she gets home from school Nisha makes bricks. Her family are debt slaves and Nisha must help to pay off their debt.

Sidra gathers litter when she is not in school and sells it to various buyers.

Both girls in Pakistan have learned about the rights of the child through the World's Children's Prize Program. Now they want to be part of the No Litter Generation and collect litter on No Litter Day on 16 May and teach others why they should stop littering!



"I make two hundred bricks every day."

"My sister and mother get up at four every morning to make bricks until late evening. My mother borrowed a big sum from the brick kiln owner for treatment for my father. Since then we are like slaves to the owner.

"After school I cook lunch. I then bring lunch to my mother and sister. I stay with them and we work until the evening. I make two hundred bricks every day.

"The owner and the munshi (supervisor) do not treat the working children well. They shout at us and often beat us cruelly. I become sad and speed up my work. I think that if I make more bricks we will be able to pay back our debt and get freedom from this work.

"The rest of the evening I do my homework. We can only buy clothes or shoes at Christmas, but thank God we have the

opportunity to go to school. I work hard at my education. I want to be a doctor and open a hospital. I will then buy clothes and shoes for my mother and sister and they will not have to work at the brick kiln any longer. I will never leave school because I know that education is the only way to make life better.

"I learnt that I have rights, that all children are important and that everyone should respect our rights. Here everybody thinks that boys are better than us girls. This must change and girls must be respected!

"I like the idea of us being the No Litter Generation. Litter can be bad for everyone, people and animals. We must stop throwing litter everywhere and teach the adults to stop doing that. It will be nice to take part in No Litter Day together with children in other countries."



"Education is the only way to make life better."



"We have already had our first Global Vote Day."



"I weighed all the litter we picked and we made a note of the weight each time."

the No Litter Generation



Sidra, 12
Class 3, BRIC school



“We are born in these tents and will finish our life journey in these tents. All members of my family collect garbage seven days a week. We sell it to vendors and buy food with the money.

“I always wonder why people waste so much food? But this way we always have food, which we could never buy from the market. Sometimes we find toys. Most of the toys are damaged, but perfect for us to play with. We never buy new clothes, we only use clothes which we find in the garbage.”

My miracle!

One day when I woke up my father told me: ‘You are not going to pick litter today but

going to school.’ This was a miracle! I never thought about school even in my dreams. I was so happy. This had not happened before in my family.

“One thing hurt me. Other students made fun of me because I was what people call a Khan Badosh (nomad) girl. I don’t know why people hate us. We are just like them! But my passion for education helped me tolerate it and later I made friends at school.

“When I started going to school others also started sending their children to school. Through education I can get respect in society. I work hard to get an education and become a social worker, so that I can fight for the rights of our people.

“I learnt that all children have rights. It was a wonderful experience. But here adults need to be educated so that they start respecting girls’ rights.

“After school I always go litter and rubbish picking. When we collect garbage other people treat us like we are not human. And the vendors often cheat when they are weighing our litter.

“We have always lived surrounded by litter. It would be nicer without the litter. But how would we then earn money? I will still be happy to belong to the *No Litter Generation*. We need to teach people about litter, to be aware of the environment, and change their habits. It will be beautiful when we have picked litter on *No Litter Day*.”



“It was a miracle going to school.”

Money from No Litter Day pays for school

Nisha and her friends will sell the litter that they pick during No Litter Day to the vendors. The money will be used for their school costs. The money from the litter that Sidra and her friends pick on that day will also be used for their schooling.



No Litter Generation collecting litter

Nisha and her friends have already become part of the No Litter Generation, and here Nisha weighs the litter that they have collected where they live and at the brick kiln.

NO LITTER day

16 MAY
MAI MAIO MAYO



جیل بلا مہملات

JIL QASHIN LA'AAN AH

स्वच्छ पीढ़ी

کچرے سے پاک نسل

SKRÄPFRI GENERATION

NO LITTER GENERATION

KEEP SWEDEN TIDY

نسل بدون زباله

GÉNÉRATION SANS DÉCHETS

GENERACIÓN SIN RESIDUOS

نسل بدون کثافات

GERAÇÃO SEM SUJEIRA

फोहोर नफाल्ने दिन

NO
LITTER
generation

