

Bhutan  
Chile  
China  
Colombia  
Denmark  
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India  
Israel  
Lebanon  
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Macau

*REAL Super Heroes*  
*REAL Stories*  
*REAL Change*

Mexico  
Peru  
Philippines  
Portugal  
Singapore  
South Africa  
Spain  
Taiwan  
Ukraine  
Uruguay  
USA



DESIGN for  
CHANGE

**I CAN**  
2015

**DESIGN FOR CHANGE**

The Riverside School, 307, Next to Army CSD depot, Airport Road, Hansol, Ahmedabad-380004

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# MEET THE **I CAN** SUPERHEROES

Introducing you to a new generation of superheroes!

We grow up seeing so many problems around us and believing that things are the way they are and that we alone cannot bring about any change. We often wait for that big idea, for that one superpower, we wish we all had, to change the world.

How about if I tell you that our children have found that superpower. That they are changing the world, one idea at a time.

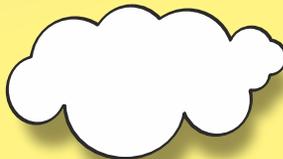
Design for Change, a simple design thinking process empowers children to realise this superpower, this sense of responsibility and agency. Through the four steps of this process- Feel, Imagine, Do and Share, children around the world are stepping up and learning that the power to create change lies in them as much as with the adults who educate them and influence their lives. From stopping child marriages to caring for the elderly, from reducing the weight of school bags to fixing potholes on the road, children are telling us that they don't have to be rich or strong or powerful to make change happen.

This book is an invitation to all children and adults around the world to join the movement of these new-age superheroes who derive their strength from empathy and the courage to make a difference.

This book's message is very simple – A more optimistic future can now be claimed not by chance – but by design.



**Kiran Bir Sethi**  
Founder  
Design for Change



**FEEL  
IMAGINE  
DO  
SHARE  
IS **I CAN****

**“Being the Change, Changes the Being”**

# FOREWORD

**We are the stories we believe in.**

The destiny of the world is shaped by the stories we love and tell. So which ones should we celebrate right now?

How about some true stories of young superheroes who are going about changing the future? Of children who are changing the world around them and don't wait for the adults to solve their problems – instead they '**become the change they want to see**'.

In this book, Design For Change brings us stories of superheroes who believe in two of the most powerful words in the universe '**I CAN**'. These stories show us that with the magic of these two words on your side, nothing is impossible. If you believe, if you can imagine a better world, if you have empathy and are willing to roll up your sleeves and get into the action - then **YOU CAN** too. More importantly, these stories show us that we too can be heroes.

May these stories inspire your inner Hero. Who knows, we may be reading your story in this book next year!!

**Ameen Haque**  
Founder, Storywallahs

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# **BamboO-Zled!**

**Ragaytung Primary School, Bhutan**

Written by: S.Z.Ruhi  
Illustrations by: Amrita K

"Sonam, no! I haven't finished with my rice yet!"

Anita ran after her friend Sonam, who couldn't stop laughing even as she held Anita's lunch-box in her hands and sprinted past her to the playground.

Anita scowled and ran even faster as she attempted to reach her friend. The playground and all their friends whooshed past but she barely noticed, all her attention was focused on the glint of the steel lunchbox in Sonam's hand as she almost tripped over herself in her rush to catch up with her.

But Sonam wouldn't slow down. She continued in her mad dash, and for an instant, Anita paused to catch her breath.

And then her eyes widened.

Sonam's laughing eyes were fixed on Anita and she ran on, unaware that she was approaching the edge of the school area where the ravines loomed before her,

*a dangerous drop that plunged straight down onto a rocky slope several hundred feet below.*



Anita wanted to scream, to shout out for her friend to stop...but her voice failed. Her legs froze and her body wouldn't move. Her heart pounded with terror as Sonam ran backwards towards the ravine, and her hand reached out...

Anita! ANITA!!

Anita jerked up in bed, her mother's voice pulling her out of the nightmare. She looked up into her mother's eyes, and realized that her heart was still pounding with terror.

It had just been a dream, that's all.

Even as she realized that, she also knew that the two deep ravines behind her school really did exist, and so did the danger of a careless student falling down the steep slope.

As she went through her morning routine and got ready for school, she couldn't rid herself of the image of her best friend falling down while she stood there, helpless and unable to stop her. As she walked into Ragaytung Primary School, she looked up at the beautiful buildings and grounds, and knew that she was lucky to be a part of one of the best schools in the Chhukha district of Bhutan, and yet...the ravines loomed ahead, a hazard that nothing had been done about.

She didn't know what could be done, and she didn't know where she could start...

*Her opportunity came later that day, when their teacher started the discussion about this year's story idea for 'Design For Change'.*

Some of the other students in her class suggested that something



could be done about the long, rocky walk to their school, while the others discussed the dangers of the school being so close to the forest. But when Anita raised her hand and started talking about the ravines, several of the other students joined in and shared their own fears about the steep fall.

The teacher asked for suggestions about what could be done about this issue, and everyone came forward with ideas of their own.

And so it was decided. This year, Ragaytung Primary School's "Story of Change" would be building a bamboo fence along the boundary between the school grounds and the ravines. But they wouldn't just stop with that. Their plans also included the planting of fruit-bearing trees and hedges along the fence as additional protection.

But a different problem reared its head. Who would do the actual work?

Sonam raised her hand. "We cannot do this by ourselves, can we? It's impossible."

*Their teacher smiled. "Nothing is impossible. We just have to think about the others who can help out."*



In the end, Anita's class decided to ask for help from their teachers, as well as the parents. And despite their busy schedules, a number of them agreed to do whatever they could to assist in making the school grounds safe.

Their first task was to clear out the thorny shrubs and bushes that abounded along the line of the future fence. Once that was accomplished, they started building the one-hundred-and-fifty-meter bamboo fence. Finally, everyone joined in and helped out in planting mango, banana and jackfruit trees, as well as rose bushes along the fence. In addition to serving as a further barrier and helping to prevent the younger children from approaching the edge, the fruits and flowers would make the new fence beautiful.

Weeks after her nightmare, Anita stood at the fence with her friend Sonam, looking down at the ravine that was no longer a danger to them. The work was almost finished, and she turned to her friend. "Do you know what got me thinking about this ravine?"

Sonam shook her head, and then her eyes widened as Anita told her all about the nightmare that had started it all. Startled by the revelation, Sonam impulsively hugged her friend.

"This was a great idea, Anita! You felt the need to make this safe, and then we all imagined what we could do to make that happen. And now that it's done, doesn't it feel really good?"

The two friends smiled, and stood there by the fence that had turned things around from a nightmare into the secure reality before them. The scent of the newly planted roses swirled around them, and they knew that their design had come to life at last.

The teacher's voice rose out over the crowd. "It's time!"

Everyone in Anita's classroom clapped and cheered, including the parents and teachers who had gathered to celebrate the new fence.

*Anita looked around, and felt a moment's pride at being the one to kick start this entire process.*



Their teacher continued when the applause died down at last. "This fence is a tribute to everyone who contributed to its construction. Years later, whenever someone comes here, they will see this and realize that the students and community of Ragaytung primary have accomplished something remarkable."

There was more applause, and the teacher smiled. "And it's not just the people of Bhutan who will get a glimpse of your efforts. It's time to share your achievement with the world!"



# **carpool Chaos**

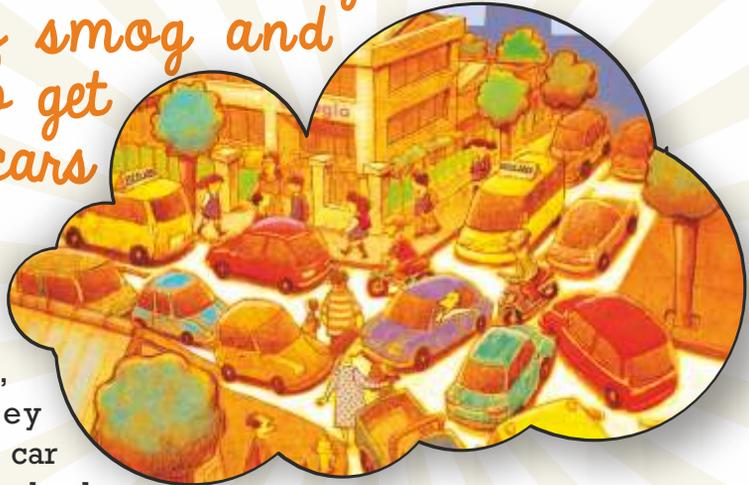
**George Chaytor English College, Chile**

Written by: Isabel B  
Illustrations by: René Moya

Every morning and afternoon, students of the George Chaytor English College in Temuco, Chile had to skirt through the chaos of drop off and pick up. During carpool time, students choked on car exhaust as drivers yelled rude phrases.

*Bus drivers were exasperated and teachers watched, terrified as their students wandered through a swamp of smog and bumpers to get from their cars to school.*

As Martina, an inquisitive twelve year old student, made the odyssey through the sea of car exhaust and smashed



bumpers, she thought to herself: There must be a better way to handle the pick up and drop off for school.

Martina shared her thoughts with her friend and classmate, Mateo. "I feel like the amount of confusion and chaos could be avoided if we just talked to the administration about making some changes around here", said Martina. So, with the assistance of several other students, Martina protested the chaotic carpool situation.

Martina and her friends gathered colorful sheets of paper, markers, paints and signposts to protest their cause. After carefully crafting the signs, the students stood, united outside of the school in the bright sun, calling for reduced carpool chaos. The administration took notice of the protesting students and called Martina into the principal's office, over the loudspeaker. Martina was frustrated at

the administration's calling her out. She trudged down to the office.

Martina entered the office doorway and not a second later the principal sternly asked her to be seated. He explained how the protests on school grounds were disruptive to the educational environment. Martina was exasperated by this statement as she knew that the carpool chaos was far more destructive than the protests.

Determined to make a change, Martina took a stand, “Principal Ruiz, I don't think you understand how your students are being affected by the carpool chaos.”

“Martina, I do understand but the administration has to deal with many pressing issues, and some small carpool disorganization is not on the top of our list.” explained Ruiz

“I know that you have other things to do, but this is the most important one by far. Your students' lives are being put at risk, teachers and parents are scared for their students and bus drivers are always stressed. I can confidently say that nothing is more important than the safety of the students of this school.” persisted Martina.

Principal Ruiz sighed as he placed his head in hand, as he realized just how much he had disregarded his students for such minimal administrative duties. Martina's passion for the issue of carpool chaos enabled Ruiz to recognize the severity of the situation and shift his focus toward the carpool chaos.

The administration offered a proposal to Martina and her friends, that if they could come up with specific actions to take in the process of improving the carpool scene, the administration would back them up.

Delighted with the administration's cooperation, Martina gathered her friends to brainstorm ideas to solve the carpooling catastrophe.

The students sat in a classroom, satisfied with their progress in the carpooling matter. However, soon it dawned on them- how can the carpooling chaos be solved? They all sat in silence, feeling defeated. The students had been so intently focused on getting their thoughts heard, that they had very little idea of how to implement these ideas. In the silence one of the students, Gabriel, was struck with an idea.

*“We should go ask my abuela for her advice!” gabriel's abuela was known for being the best advisor in town.*

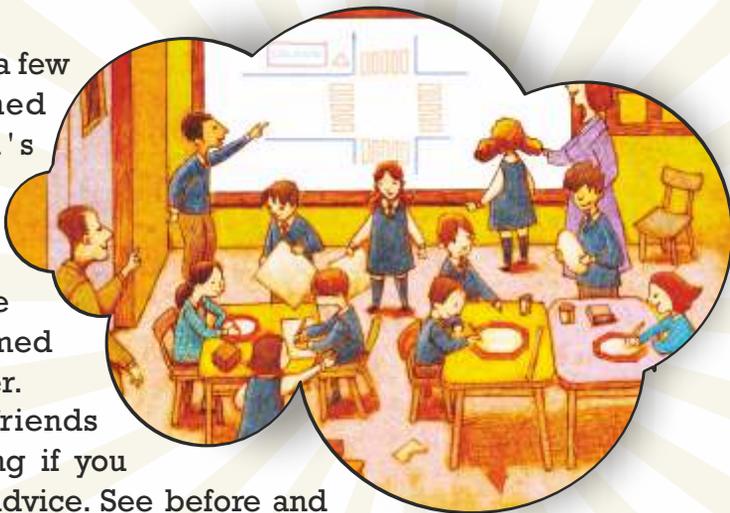
Martina, Gabriel and a few other students rushed over to Gabriel's grandmother's house to ask for her advice.

“Ay, Gabriel how nice to see you!” exclaimed Gabriel's grandmother.

“Hola Abuela! My friends and I were wondering if you could give us some advice. See before and after school the carpool gets really messy and we're trying to find a way to fix that.”, explained Gabriel. Abuela smiled with a glint in her eyes, because she knew the perfect solution.

“How about this Gabriel, you explain to me the specifics of the problem and then you tell me how they should be changed” encouraged Abuela.

“Ok... well it's really scary to walk from my car to school because of all the mean drivers”, said Gabriel.



“And why do you think they might be acting mean?”, asked Abuela. “Ummm...maybe they are upset about the carpool?” thought Gabriel.

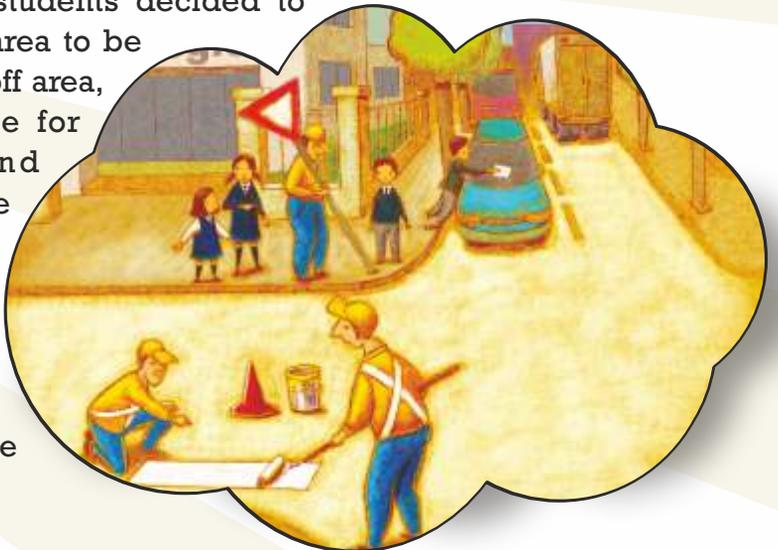
“Yes, and why do you think that might be, mi amor?”, asked Abuela. “I think it might be because...there aren't good signs telling them where to go, so maybe they are just confused?” mused Gabriel.

“And what do you think you could do to solve that?”, asked Abuela. “Well there are no signs to direct people where to go, so maybe we could put up signs of our own? And the drivers are always so angry, so maybe we could start encouraging better road etiquette?”

*“Ay, I knew you could do it, mi amor! You see, you had the solutions all along, all you needed was a little nudge”, said Abuela with pride in her eyes.*

“Thank you Abuela, I think we know what to do now! Chao!”

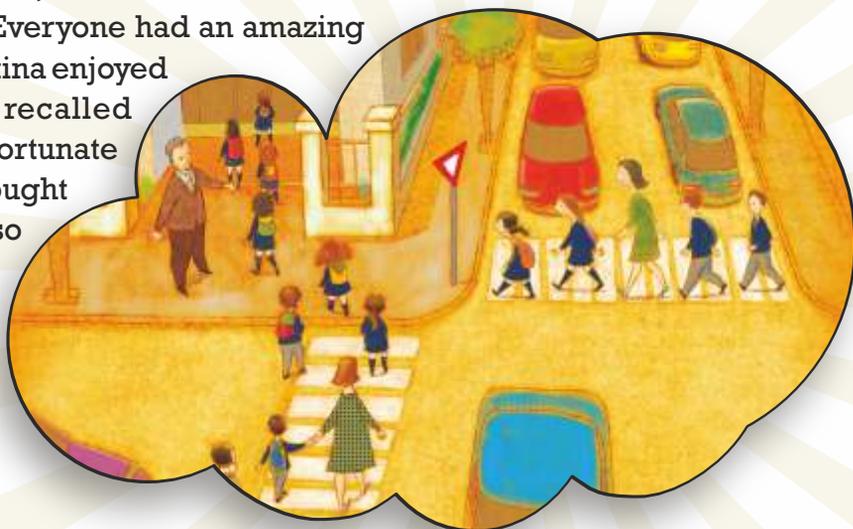
Gabriel, Martina and their friends raced back to school to implement their newfound solutions. On their way back, ideas began to flow. The students decided to remove the parking area to be converted to a drop off area, expand the schedule for student arrival and begin discussing the new changes with the traffic officers. The students discussed their ideas with parents and the administration. The



parents and administration had to be won over by passionate speeches and another protest at school. After more time and efforts, the parents and the administration recognized the issue. Students, teachers, and parents helped make signs, give reminders to drive better and encourage safe driving, and soon enough the carpool chaos was a thing of the past.

*Soon, everyone began to benefit from the carpool system that now ran like a well-oiled machine: students, teachers, parents and bus drivers.*

The success of the carpool chaos renovation even made it to the local press! Delighted with their achievements, Gabriel, Martina and their classmates threw a celebration for the whole school, including parents, with assistance from the administration. Everyone had an amazing time, and as Martina enjoyed the party, she recalled how such an unfortunate situation had brought her community so close.





# **A Little Work for a Lot of Play**

**Primary school of Mingsheng Ave., China**

Written by: Sahana Srinivasan  
Illustrations by: Anisha Thampy

“I know you're happy that it is Saturday, but you need to eat slower!” laughed Ziyue's mother.

“Yue's parents just bought her a new football and I MUST meet everyone at the school playground in 10 minutes or I'll miss the first game!” he said, gobbling up his bun and congee.



Ziyue's father looked up from the daily newspaper and smiled indulgently. “Oh, I've eaten a lot faster than that on Saturday mornings. Those were the good old days, eh? There's nothing like an endless game of hide and seek to make the perfect weekend!”

“Have a great day, Mum and Dad! I'll be home for lunch!” said Ziyue as he bolted to the school playground, only to find Yifan, Yue, Minhao, Shiqi and Yufan sitting morosely on the steps of the Primary School of Mingsheng Avenue.

“It's closed”, mumbled Yifan, kicking at the stones. “Neither the school nor the playground is open on weekends.”

*“It can't be so bad, guys! We just have to find another playground nearby!”*

said Minhao, trying to cheer everyone up. "Let's go to Shiqi's house and look up a map of the city, we will surely find something!"

As Yufan looked at the map of the city, she quickly realized there were no public playgrounds to be found. "That can't be right!" said Ziyue. "My father was just telling me about how he would play outside all day, and he grew up in this city!"



A simple internet search revealed that the city had changed massively since Ziyue's father had been a young boy. As the city became more developed, the need for houses, offices, and parking lots increased. These new city buildings were built on land that used to be parks.

"Well, that's great for the adults, but what about us?", the children wondered.

*"Maybe the grown-ups don't know what happened."*

*"Well then, they SHOULD."*

Over the next few days, the children planned how they would tell the adults about the lack of playgrounds in their beloved city. Ziyue would go to the library and collect old pictures of the town that showed the beautiful green spaces they used to have. Minhao would find out what buildings now stood in these old parks and take pictures of them. Meanwhile, Yifan, who loved writing and poetry,

changed the words of some popular songs on the radio to better suit their cause. Yufan wrote out a short letter to the city authorities explaining the problem and the group's mission, but was too shy to send it through the post.



The children would work on their plans during lunch break at school, and soon, their teacher, Mr. Xizhao, noticed

that they had suddenly become very secretive and purposeful. One day, he came up to them during the break and asked, “What are my lovely students up to? I've never seen you stay indoors when you could be out playing!”

*“Oh but teacher, we are working inside now so we can play outside later!” exclaimed Shiqi.*

“We can only play outside when school is open but weekends and holidays, the school is shut and we have nowhere else to go!”

“Yes! I have had a new football for a week now, and we still haven't played any matches with it!” said Yue. Mr. Xizhao could not help smiling at their enthusiasm and determination. “How can I help?”

With an adult helping them, work became easier. Mr. Xizhao helped Yue open a Weibo page, and the old and new photos were uploaded. He corrected Yufan's letter and sent it to the local government office. Not just that, he made a call to the government hotline explaining the whole story. Together, they even recorded

the children singing the updated pop songs and posted it on the Weibo page. The page was an instant success, as local users began liking and sharing it with all their friends. Comments and advice started pouring in – some people requested the school to keep the playground open on holidays, while others, who worked in city planning, offered ideas on how to solve this issue.

As the page and music videos gained popularity, the local media took notice. The story of the children and their search for a place to play was even featured in the daily newspaper! Then one morning, the children received a very interesting phone call. It was from the vice-Mayor of the city, who was calling to congratulate them on their noble mission, and commend them on their hard work. He was very proud of his young citizens who were taking an active interest in the world around them, and wanted to help them achieve their goal. This conversation, which was broadcast on the morning radio show, made the children feel like celebrities!

Every day, their teacher would greet the children with some piece of good news. Their work was gaining support from the local authorities, and soon, it would be time to put their plan into action. Over the winter break, the children were invited to visit the Urban Planning and Research Institute, where they met with designers, urban planners and civil engineers who listened patiently to their ideas and showed them how they could be implemented in real life. On the first day of school after the winter break, Mr. Xizhao welcomed the children at the main gate. “I have a surprise for you”, he said excitedly. As the children followed him into the main hall, they saw that the assembly room was completely packed with all the students of the school.

*“Wow! The whole school has gathered! Is a special guest going to visit us today, Teacher?” they asked.*



“Not one, but six special guests. Their names are Ziyue, Yifan, Yue, Minhao, Yifan, and Shiqi!” he said, as he led them up to the very front of the room where all the teachers and the principal stood.

The children could hardly believe it! The assembly was called just for them! And then, Mr. Xizhao began to speak. He told the whole school how these young children had accomplished so much in such little time, and how proud everyone was of them, because having an idea is not enough - one needs the perseverance to make these ideas a reality. That is what made the children real heroes.

As all the students clapped, there was just one more announcement to make. The first public park was ready, and would be opened as soon as the day's lessons ended, and best of all, a football tournament had been organized, so Yue could finally play with her new football!

# **CIGABIÓNICA**

**I.E. Rural Hojas Anchas, Colombia**

Written by: Palash Chaturvedi  
Illustrations by: Souradeep Ghosh

As school got over, the broken verses from the Colombian national anthem discussed during the history class were still resonating in their heads.

“Hoy que la madre patria se halla herida,  
Hoy que debemos todos combatir, combatir,  
Demos por ella nuestra vida  
Que morir por la patria no es morir, es vivir”

*“Now when the motherland is wounded,  
Now when we must all fight, fight,  
Let us give our life for her,  
Because to die for one’s country is not to  
die but live”*

Carlos said “What do you mean by a wounded motherland?”

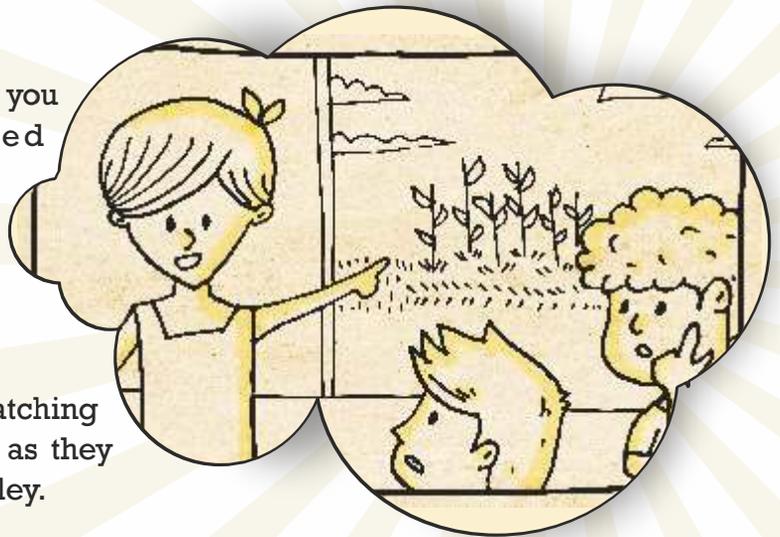
David replied “A country torn by war or any other calamity”

Diana was silently watching the coffee plantations as they walked through the valley.

Carlos enquired “What do you think Diana? Diana?”

Diana recollected her senses, “What?”

Carlos repeated his question, “What do you think is a wounded motherland?”



“And if there is no war how could we die for our country?” David added.

Diana pointed towards the landscape, “Do you know that these beautiful coffee plantations were declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 2011?”

“So what? This is something that we all should be proud of!” Carlos said.

David was yearning to talk about war, “Yeah! And that doesn't call for a war in any way whatsoever...”

Diana chose to ignore David's comment, “That is what I am saying, we should be proud of it, this is our motherland... but have you ever heard the cries, have you ever felt the wounds on this landscape?”

“Yes, this is because of the gold mining, the deforestation and the erosion is all due to that.” Carlos replied.

David hesitantly says “Gold mining is important for the economy and we're just children, we cannot do anything about it!”

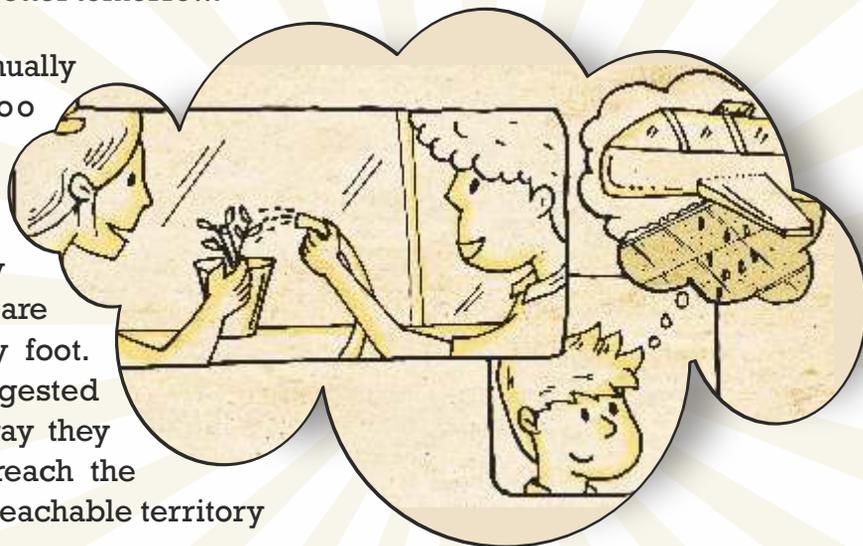
*Diana interrupted him “A few minutes ago you were ready to fight a war for your motherland...”*

The three of them started doing exhaustive research on the environmental impact of gold mining in Colombia.

Mining has left a trail of mercury contamination in countless rivers and streams, and according to the Ministry of Environment, in 2013 Colombia lost 120,933 hectares of natural forest. In the present scenario, one could easily imagine a future with a degraded ecosystem, but these kids decided to use their imagination in a better way!

After carefully assessing the situation, the children decided to combat erosion and deforestation by planting more trees, to sow the seeds for a better tomorrow.

Now, to sow manually would take too long and could jeopardize their integrity, since many lands affected are inaccessible by foot. So, Carlos suggested that the best way they could take to reach the rugged and unreachable territory was by air.



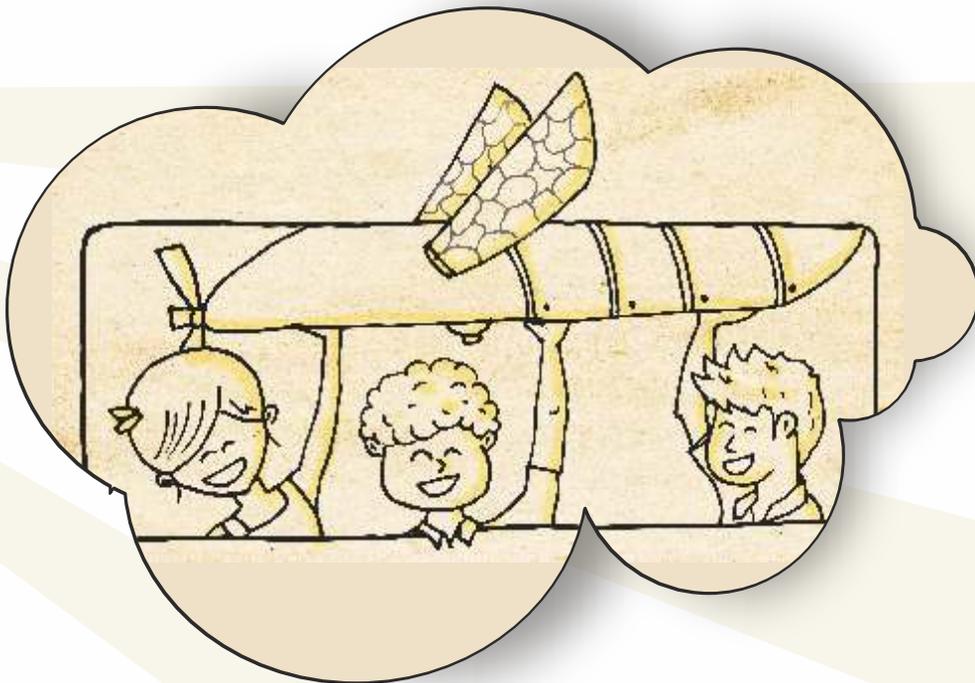
Inspired by the magical manual Design for Change, these children from Hojas Anchas did a team research project on science and technology to learn about aero modeling and strengthening the soil.

*Their imagination eventually took flight in the shape of the award winning Cigabiónica project.*

The word 'Ciga' came from the initials of Cicada, an insect that lives in the municipality and is coincidentally the Chinese symbol of rebirth. 'Bionica' is derived from the word bionics, the science that studies the design of machines that operate according to the principles observed in living beings.

The children from the Primary and Secondary grade levels worked together, gathered support and designed a flying machine. The

construction of the machine was done according to the structure of a cicada- the body was made with carbon fiber to resemble the body shell of the insect that is tough but light in weight, the wings were made with Styrofoam simulating the cicada wings. There are two motors to power up the machine along with a brush motor, a propeller, a reliever and a speed control device. This flying machine can support a camcorder with 150 for a better aerial view, this camcorder acts like the eyes of the cicada. Finally, a gas container was added to the machine with its base removed, which



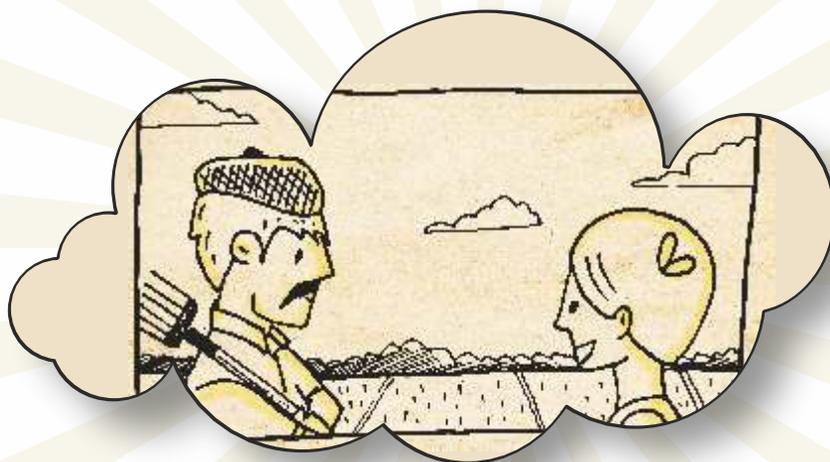
acts as the disseminator of seeds. This flying machine would enable the children to monitor the land erosion process and at the same time, the sprinkler would plant seedlings to avoid more land slides.

As soon as the machine was constructed and approved, Carlos, David and Diana gathered a team of ten. They divided the tasks to spread seeds of deep-rooted plants, the most essential plants to curb the immediate effects of the situation. The deep-rooted grow quickly and cling firmly to the ground.

Initially, the peasant community looked down upon the kind of plants chosen and it was a major challenge to convince them about the choice of plants. The children accompanied the peasants to the fields with information leaflets about the need to restore the topsoil to prevent erosion and also explained to them the nature of these wonderful plants and their benefits on the arid ground.

The children nurtured this program with care and perseverance, the exhaustive operations done for the reforestation of this valley came as a rejuvenation of the natural beauty of this region.

Soon the dry eroded areas started becoming green. Animals and insects repopulated the mountains and the ecosystem was slowly restored. This incredible story is still happening now. A toy aircraft controlled by children of a rural school in the mountains of



Colombia, is spreading seeds of hope. Many schools in the Municipality want to adopt the project that reached over 80% plant coverage. This is how environmental awareness in the Supia community was established!.



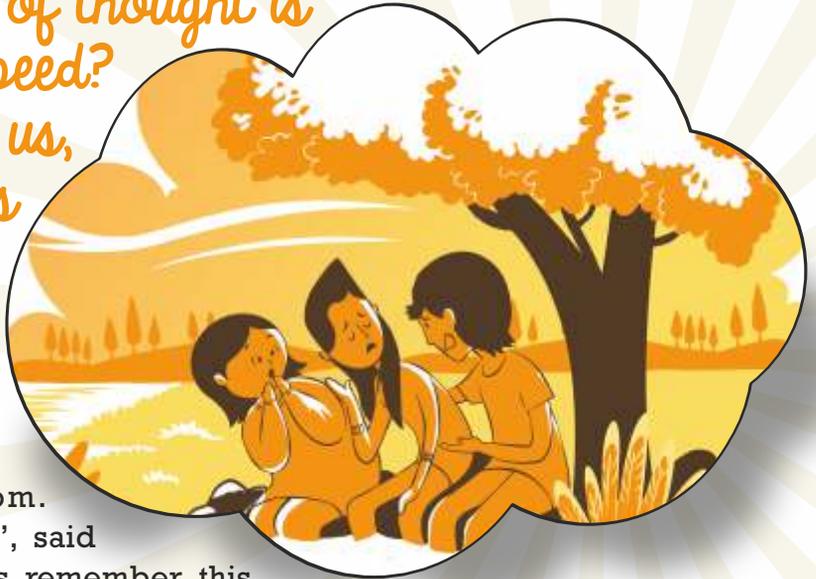
**Love of freedom. Freedom to love**

**Skorpeskolen Privatskole , Denmark**

Written by: Mansi Chitranshi  
Illustrations by: Amrita K

On a breezy sunny afternoon of Copenhagen, Kathrine, Liz and Nicki casually sat down under a tree, in a park, chit chatting. “ Hey Kat, do you know that this museum, we are going to this weekend, has an excellent collection of antique and modern weapons, ranging from gorgeously ornamented princely weapons and war trophies, firearms to state-of-the-art handguns. Can't wait to see!” While Katherine and Nicki were discussing their plans to visit the Royal Danish Arsenal Museum, Liz seemed to be lost in her thoughts.

*“What's wrong Liz?” asked Nicki, concerned about her gloomy expressions. “I have been noticing how your train of thought is catching speed? Share with us, whatever is going on in your mind please?”*

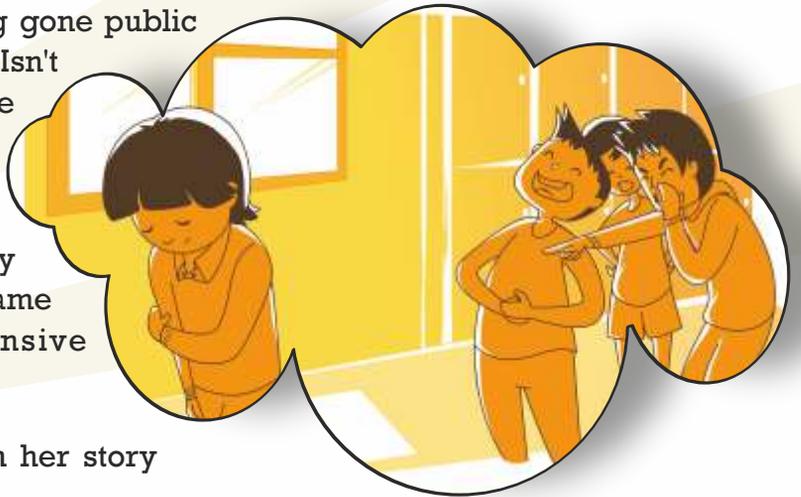


“Love of freedom. Freedom to love”, said Liz. “Do you guys remember this slogan? This was the slogan during World Out games 2009 in Copenhagen, and it has never rung truer in Copenhagen than today. But there have been some instances, which make me doubt about the truth behind this slogan”. Liz reverts to her pensive train of thought.

“I know what you are saying Liz, but fail to understand the context, really? What is it that you're trying to tell us? Can you be more elaborate please?” Katherine questioned inquisitively.

With a deep sigh, Liz started to talk. “Do you guys remember Sebastian from the third grade in our junior school? The same guy who shifted to another group. I recently got to know that he has stopped coming to school. He feared a world where no one would want anything to do with him – more so, he thought that even his church-going parents won't accept him for being gay. This feeling was already a reality in class, where he was persistently bullied at his small-town Esbjerg International School, despite not having gone public with his sexuality. Isn't there something we can do about it?”

By now, Katherine and Nicki, slowly slipped into the same melancholic pensive mood as Liz.



Liz continued with her story about Sebastian.

*“His cousin sister, Timothy told me that at school, a bunch of boys threw sharp pencils at Sebastian's back and barked gay insults at him.*

They called him repulsive and referred to him as a 'thing.' Lunchtime wasn't any better. One day, students videoed him on their phones like he was the star attraction at the local zoo. 'Look Seb-As\*-Tian -the gay kid,' they ridiculed. The rest of the year he ate lunch outside.”

“It's so sad. But unfortunately, Sebastian isn't alone Liz. Nearly two-thirds of students report feeling insecure and ostracized in school because of their sexual orientation, most of the time,” added Katherine.

*“But no child should be afraid to go to school!” said Nicki startlingly.*

“But they are!” added Liz. “Students need to feel safe, and they need to feel supported by their schools. I think it is imperative to have a discussion about transgenderism by age 7 – 9 perhaps? What if we begin educating these children about these issues? With plenty of ideas we could implement to manage issues of school bullying. We could offer free kits for teachers and a panoply of resources for addressing both bullying and bias. What do you both think?”

Liz, Katherine and Nicki were quick to make a Facebook page by the name of 'Love of freedom. Freedom to love'. They got assistance from other friends and teachers, to draft a children's book with stories and illustrations. They even made a teacher's manual, to help them talk about these topics to young children.



During their groundwork and preparation for their unique mission, they learnt several things through it all. Liz, Katherine and Nicki strongly believed that elementary and middle school is a perfect time to model diversity.

At first, teachers found it difficult to address such issues with children. “What do we tell them? That boy is gay meaning he likes boys. Please don't bully him?” enquired one of the teacher in sheer uneasiness. Nicki was quick to respond, “Joanne, let me conduct the first session to give you an idea about how to address this topic with young children. It won't be difficult or awkward, I promise!”

Next day, 20 children of the second grade were asked to gather in a common hall. They were all inquisitive on what was going to happen next, even though the teachers had given them a slight hint on what was going to be discussed.

Nicki began talking to the children with confidence, "Hello everyone! I am here to talk to you about something very important today. It is essential for all of us to be aware of and understand that the world is made up of several different people. Just like there are people of different countries, cultures, colors, religions, ethnic backgrounds, sizes and shapes, etc., similarly there are many ways to express yourself as a boy or man, or as a girl or woman. Sometimes there are boys that will seem more like a girl and at times there will be girls that will seem more like a boy. In fact there are many people that will act, look and behave entirely different from the rest of us. It is important we respect the differences of these boys and girls. These are people that are 'trans-gender'. I can imagine this is a little difficult to understand for you all, but it is important that you know just how different people can be. We will have several discussions as you grow older about the significance of respecting people who are different from you as well as respecting those who are similar”.

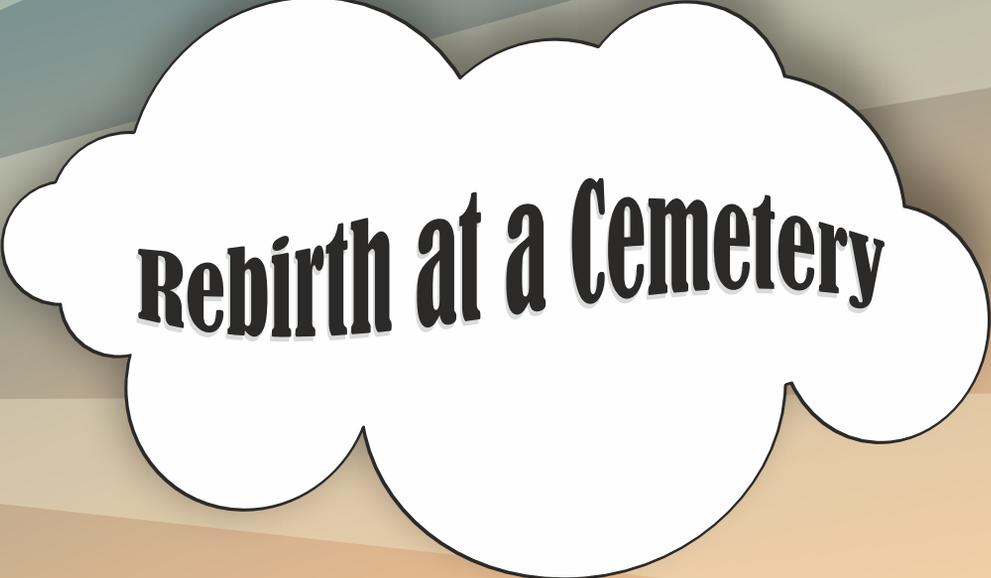
The project, 'Love of freedom. Freedom to love' was a big success at the school and was much appreciated by the school principal and the teachers. The group, now bigger by the head count of over 37 youth, has been proactive in combating anti-gay behavior. The group provided sensitivity training on sexual-orientation issues and how to identify and avert discrimination, harassment and bullying of students, to more than 25 teachers and administrators in

a span of one year. During the annual day celebration, Liz, Kathrine and Nicki were felicitated by their school principal.

When they were called on the stage, all three of them were contended to reflect on how things eventually turned out, recalling what a challenging road it had been. Liz was handed over the mic to say a few words. She said, “Thank you everyone, for this honor. This has been a long journey indeed! The most important message of our project is simple. Not all of us are alike. Kids with different sexuality are everywhere. They're in your class. They're standing on the fault line of a powerful inland shift between old rulebooks and new values in our society. Just as the children of every civil rights movement have done, they're taking a lot of the heat. Some are high-spirited leaders; others are clogged with fear. But they all want to grow and learn, and want your respect. I hope, all of us pledge today to extend our understanding to these children.”

Liz, Katherine and Nicki plan to reach out to “LGBT Denmark”, “Sex og Samfund”, (Danish Organizations) to get their support for their project and also to get a publisher to publish their book as real teaching materials.





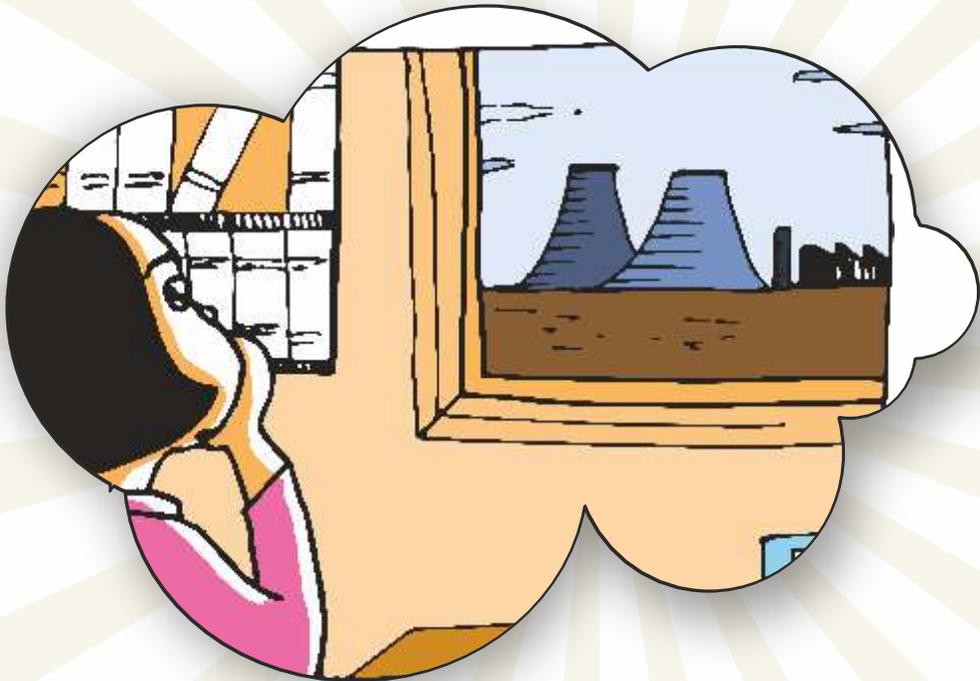
# **Rebirth at a Cemetery**

**Collège Albert Samain, France**

Written by: Isabel B  
Illustrations by: Souradeep Ghosh

Aida, a 12 year old student from a school in France sat in her geography class one day, staring out the window at the urban wasteland that was her school's backyard. The area surrounding the school had once been home to an industrial center, but it was shut down leaving behind unemployment and wasteland.

*"You know how everyone always talks about this unemployment problem and the bad condition of the area where our school is", whispered Aida to her friend Danton sitting next to her in class.*



"Yeah sure, everyone knows" said Danton.

"Well... what if we did something about it?" suggested Aida with a light in her eyes.

After class, Aida went to her teacher and pitched her idea about

decreasing the unemployment rate. Her teacher, Clara was delighted that Aida wanted to make a change, and said that they could have a brainstorming session during the next class to work towards solving the issue.

*The next day, Aida sat expectantly, excited for her teacher to announce the brainstorming session at the start of class.*

“Good morning class, today we are going to do something a bit different. At the suggestion of your classmate, Aida we are going to focus on the state of the area around our school and the unemployment rate that has resulted from the abandonment of the once prosperous urban center where our school is. Now we are looking to solve this issue, does anyone have ideas about how we can begin?” said Clara.



“Well maybe we could take field trips out to see what the abandoned land is really like, so we can think of ways to improve it. We all feel really trapped here in school, because there isn't really anything else close by” said a girl near the back of the classroom.

“That sounds great! Now how do you think we could coordinate that?” said Clara.

“We could split into two groups and one could coordinate transportation and the other could be in charge of looking at the empty areas in the city”, offered Aida.

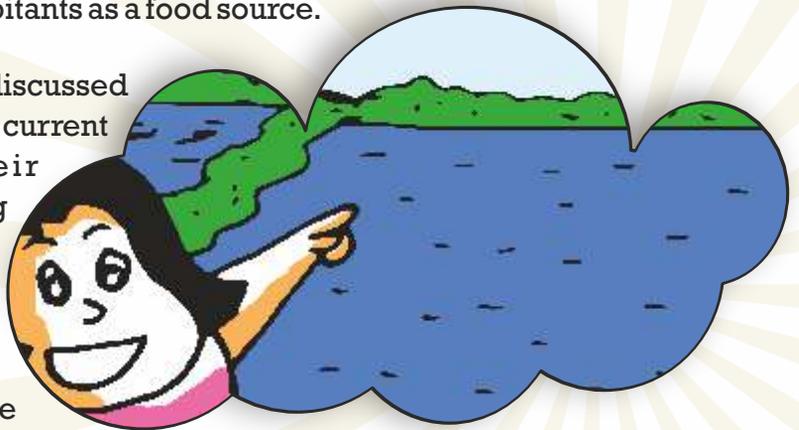
So the class coordinated trips and set off to investigate the city just a few weeks after their brainstorming session.

*“Woah guys come check this out!” said Aida pointing to a freshwater lens in the canal excitedly.*

The students realized that this lens was going completely unused and they could bring it to the attention of the city, to be used for the benefit of its inhabitants as a food source.

Another group discussed the fact that the current location of their school was going to be abandoned and turned into more urban wasteland, the next year, as the school was changing

locations. The students wanted to keep the area alive, so they proposed that it be converted into a farm, vegetable garden or maybe even an amusement park! The students continued to survey the land and look for ways to make it more beneficial to their community, for several months. After these months had passed, the students sat in their geography class once again, and began to brainstorm proposals to transform the urban wasteland. Aida led the discussion this time.



“Ok guys, we have a much better idea of what's out there in the urban wasteland but we don't have concrete solutions. Today we need to come up with ways to change our community, given the information we have now’, said Aida to her classmates.

“Yeah that sounds good, but we have to come up with solutions that can stay in place for a long time, otherwise it's not worth it,” said a boy near the back of the classroom, named Dariel.

“Yes, I agree! We should make the land permanently prettier, so people will come back into these areas”, said a girl named Denise.

“Yeah, our group noticed that the area near the cemetery is really clean. So maybe we could make it into a living area!” said a boy named Gerard.

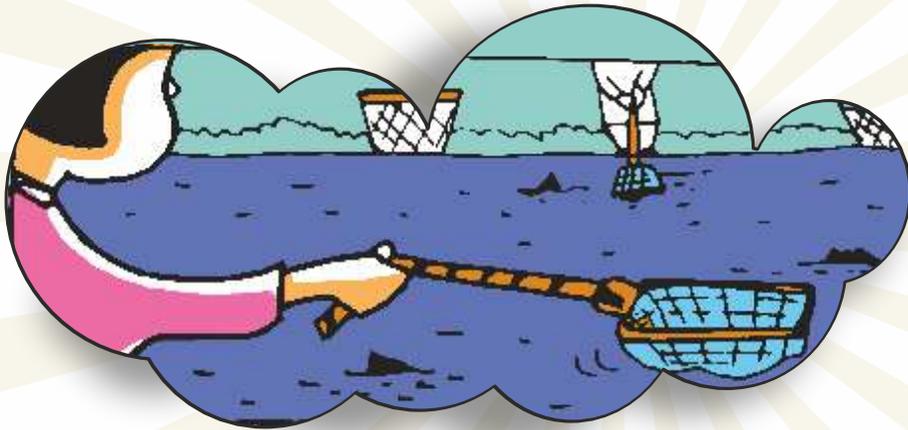


“Oh and we could make this area like a park or something, in between the cemetery and the channel so people will visit a lot and keep it nice and inhabited”, suggested Charlotte, a quiet girl sitting in the back left corner of the classroom.

“Oh that sounds great! We can clean up the channel too, as part of the project!” said Aida excitedly.

Aida and her classmates set off to clean up the channel, and as they were doing so, they realized that the channel should be put to use. They came up with the idea to transform a portion of the channel into an aquaculture farm to feed the community and encourage new restaurants to settle in the new area, making it more attractive to

prospective residents. The students also remembered that there were many sports businesses settled on the edge of town, and if they could get these businesses to move into the uninhabited area, residents would also be drawn in. There would still be part of the clean channel area left, so the students decided it could be



converted into a swimming pool to draw in the sport businesses.

The students sat around the channel coming up with more sustainable ways to make the area around the cemetery more appealing to prospective residents. They thought to have a playground built to attract families with children. Building this new area, the students realized would also solve the issue of unemployment, as it would create many new jobs as the area was recreated.

# **Menstrual Hygiene**

**The Galaxy School, India**

Written by: Vishwesh Desai  
Illustrations by: Vinayak J

Generally speaking, every time some sort of occasion (forget occasion, it might even be just an un-noteworthy event) passes by, teenagers quickly jump on it as a chance to meet up with their closest friends (at someone's house, some café, a park, wherever) to 'celebrate' it. Of course, that's always met with a healthy dose of parental skepticism. After all, parents reasoned, who decided to celebrate their school's anniversary? Didn't their children always complain about being forced to put up with all the fuss the school made about it while they were trying to study? But the teenagers paid their concerns no mind, deciding to go all-out and have as much fun partying as they wanted.

They might call it that, but 'party' meant nothing so much as 'meeting up, talking/chatting and watching several movies for several hours back-to-back.

Raj was at just such a 'party', laughing and chuckling together with his closest circle of friends at his house, fondling reminiscing on how the events at a previous 'party' had taken a turn no one had ever expected.

“Oi, Raj,” Aashna called out, voice rising in a way that he could only describe as 'pissed.' “Put that godforsaken book down and come here! It's your turn to play!”

“Oho! Look, guys, Aashna learnt a new word!” Ram laughed, nudging Aashna good-naturedly.

Raj loathed using an extremely over-used line, but if looks could kill, Ram would be walking arm-in-arm with Lord Yama.

“Coming!” Raj said hurriedly, turning about to put his book on a nearby table, just as a snippet of a fragment of a half-covered article caught his eye. “Wait,” he said. “On second thoughts, I'll pass for now.”

Dismayed noises echoed across the room, Aashna expressing her intense desire to go and pummel (or pulverize, Raj wasn't sure which) yours truly to a fleshy pulp. Ram did his best to calm her

down, and Raj took the chance to flee from the room, bringing the newspaper with him.

“Importance of Menstrual Hygiene, huh?” Raj mused, settling down comfortably on the ground. What began as idle curiosity soon became sharp interest, coloured by concern. Infection... Bacteria... Woah! Chances of cervical cancer!? Raj rushed into the room where his friends were still continuing their game.



“Guys! Look at this!” Raj said, barging into the room and interrupting their game. Aashna made to hit him. Amrita caught her hand. “What is it?” she asked softly. Raj passed the newspaper to them.

*“Importance of- woah, menstruation?”*



*Ram exclaimed, dropping the newspaper like the plague. He glared accusingly at Raj. “Dude, have you gone mental?”*

“Just read it,” Raj insisted, glowering back. “Arre-” Aashna began, irritated. “Why?” Amrita interrupted, brow furrowed in consternation. “Read it,” Raj said firmly.

Again, their expressions changed from doubt and uncertain cynicism to worried concern as they skimmed over the page-long article.

“See?” Raj said, trying to keep the 'told-you-so' note from his voice. “It's sorta important.”

“You mean very important,” Amrita corrected, hands on her hips.

Raj shrugged. “Whatever the degree of importance, it's quite serious. Infection is bad no matter how you look at it, but cancer is something else entirely.”

“Just look at that list,” Ram said, solemn for the first time –Raj suspected- in his life. The most easy-going boy in the school acting serious? Am I dreaming?

“And it also says that women in rural areas are most affected. Most of our support staff lives in rural areas, and there are hundreds of places like that all around Rajkot! Shouldn't we do something about this? I mean, people could get cancer!”

“Yeah,” Aashna agreed, “but what? It says you have to, er, wash the cloths you use in boiling water and dry them in the sun,” Aashna snorted, stammering a bit in the middle of the sentence. “Fat chance of that!”

Raj raised an eyebrow quizzically.

*“They'd be too embarrassed to hang their blood-stained cloths outside,” Amrita explained. “So the cloths never get sterilized properly.”*

“But that's still just a guess, right?” Ram added. “Shouldn't we ask the women themselves about how they deal with menstruation? Maybe the four of us could go survey them!”

“Yeah, but...” Raj trailed off, glancing at Amrita. Amrita glanced at him.

*“It’s better if we’re the only ones who ask them,” Amrita said hurriedly, the words coming out in a rush.*

“Why?” Ram asked, frowning. “Why’d...” His face went slack when he realized, quickly turning red. “Oh. Oooh. Yeah, okay.”

Raj nudged him, smirking. Ram smacked him on the arm. “We could search up on sanitary pads and periods while you two are gone,” Raj suggested. “Optimal use of time.”

All four of them identified rural areas around their houses or their school, where the girls would go, armed with pen and paper, to interview various women on how they handled their periods.

“Er, pads are too expensive, so I usually just take a cloth and wrap it around and wear it for the whole day,” said Renuben, a housewife living in a nearby rural area. “Then I take it off at the end of the day and wash it.”



“How long do you wear it?” Aashna asked, trying hard to keep her voice below shout-level.

“Um, I think around twelve hours.”

“And where do you dry the cloth?” Amrita asked politely.

“I dry it inside the house, in some corner where no-one would see it,” Renuben said, a little guiltily.

“Accha,” Aashna said. “Where do you throw the used cloths? And when do you get a new one?”

“I just reuse it. I’ve been using the same cloth for a few years now,” Renuben said, to the shock of the two teenagers.

The two girls went around the community, asking after nearly 70

women and interviewing them before meeting up with the boys at Raj's place once again.

"They wear it for 12 hours!?" Ram exclaimed. "We found that you can only wear a cloth for 5 hours, max!"

"That's not even the worst of it," Raj said heavily. "Even a cloth is a great step up from sand and husk and dirty rags, which almost 90% of Indian women use! Here, look at this!" Raj handed Amrita what he'd found on the net.

"Well, even if you say that, 70% of women can't afford pads or hygienic cloths, so they use rags. We can deal with the 20% that can afford pads by just raising awareness!"

"But that leaves 50%, which is half of all women in India!" Aashna argued.

"Yeah, so we need something that tackles affordability, efficacy, and-"

"But we need to get all of these women to know about the dangers of poor menstrual hygiene, and that's going to be tough."

"Uh-huh," Aashna said. "'Cause they're too embarrassed to talk about menstruation with their parents and husbands, and some of them can't even throw away their used rags because of religious beliefs, so how do you expect them to know about the risks?"

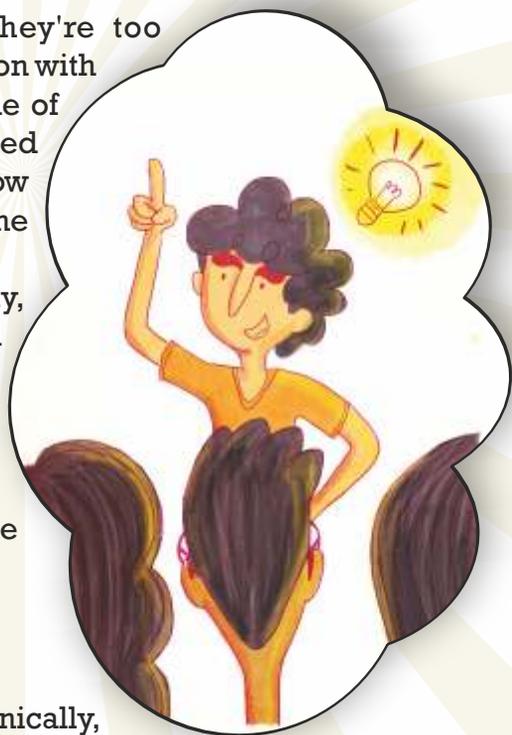
"Yup," Amrita said absent-mindedly, skimming over Raj's research, which outlined in full all the diseases and stats related to menstruation in India.

"Thank the Gods for pads!" She gushed, somewhat relieved that she wouldn't face the problems the research described.

"That's it!" Raj exclaimed.

"What?" Ram asked, eyebrow raised.

"Even if they can't reuse cloths hygienically, there are a few types of pads that can be reused."



And if we-"

"We already ruled out pads," Aashna pointed out irritably. "Too expensive."

"Just listen," Raj said. "Pads have a relatively simple design. Even the reusable variety. So if we want something that's both effective and cheap, how about having..."

"The women make their own pads," Amrita finished. "Yeah, Raj, that's genius!"

"Every dog has its day," Ram said grudgingly.

Raj kicked him in the shin before continuing, "So maybe we can learn how to make these pads from professionals, then teach it to everyone in our community, and ask them to show everyone they know!"

"Ever increasing circle of influence," Amrita said, nodding. "Nice idea."

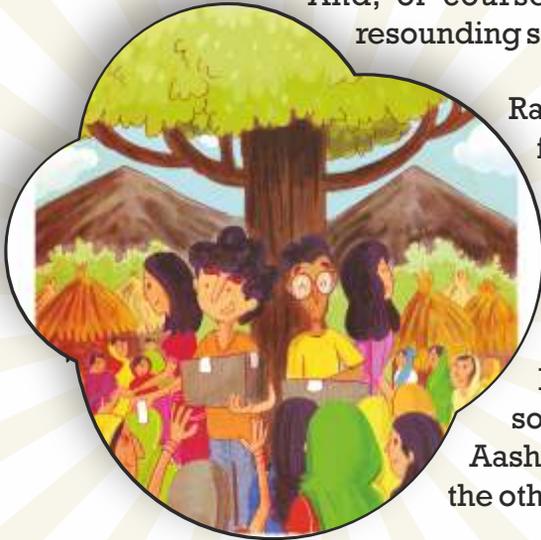
Raj smirked at Ram, bowing with a flourish.

Over the next week, they started awareness campaigns for both genders, talking to different people in different communities about the importance of menstrual hygiene, using the article Raj had found so long ago to back them up. Of course, change wouldn't appear overnight, but Raj thought that they were slowly making progress. In the midst of everything, they made a documentary about everything they'd done. Raj wasn't able to get the help of very many professionals, but he glib-talked a few NGOs into giving them tips and advice about a 'reusable homemade pad,' which Amrita and Aashna quickly took to making and testing, while the boys made a 5 step manual on how to make and sterilize the pads. They got the support of their school, holding a donation rally to collect cloth. They worked in tandem with their art teacher to design a 3 size template for the pads, after which they held a workshop on making and reusing the pads for the support staff. Later on, Raj got three members of the support staff to help them hold similar workshops in the slums of Rajkot. Of course, once the awareness campaigns began yielding fruit, women were far more inclined to listen to what

the teens had to say about menstrual hygiene. They got the support of their husbands and parents, which helped a lot.

Needless to say, Raj and company weren't satisfied with just this much. With the support of social activists, they came up with a grand plan to tackle the social taboos regarding menstruation. All four of them soon went on for more campaigns, reaching out to adolescents and girls in rural areas.

And, of course, all their plans were met with resounding success.



Raj danced out of the way of Aashna's fist, laughing and chuckling. All of them had been visibly more cheerful and optimistic after their pet project had evolved into something big, so much that Aashna's regular beatings had become more of a habit than something caused by anger. In fact, Aashna herself had calmed down, and the other three had matured as well.

That didn't mean they didn't have crazy fun each time they met up, though.

"Oi, Raj! Come here! Don't go hunting for some new news articles again!"

Raj smiled, putting down the newspapers and fetching a packet of biscuits. "Coming!"

# **Fresh Food for a Fresh Start**

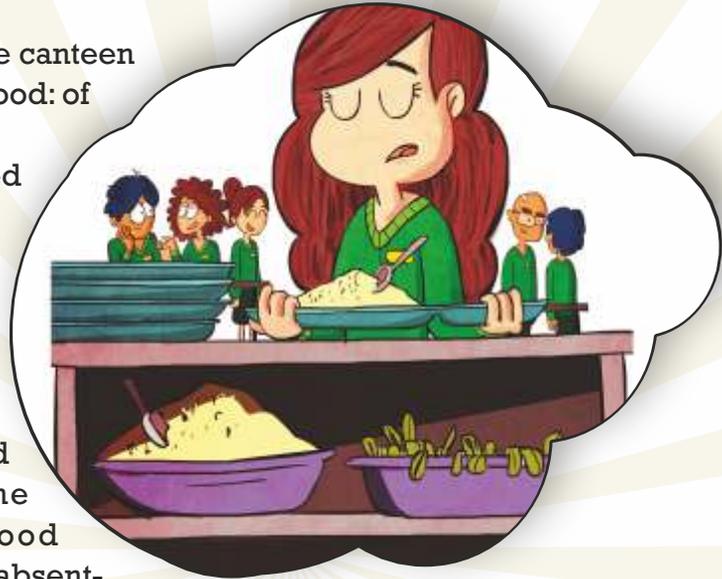
**Democratic School, Israel**

Written by: Isabel B  
Illustrations by: Vinayak J

Lea walked into the canteen by herself in Democratic School Kfar Saba, and she immediately felt isolated, as she did each time entering the canteen.

*She watched groups of friends sitting together, laughing, and talking but as usual, no one called to her to come sit with them.*

She walked up to the canteen line to receive her food: of course calling the rancid mush plopped on her plate “food” was a generous description.



She plopped down in a seat nearest to the entrance and began pushing the oily and bland food around on her plate absent-mindedly. She like the others

from her special ed class never sat with the rest of the kids from the school from whom they always felt disconnected. She knew everyone viewed them differently because they had Aspergers syndrome and some with even more severe Autism. But she didn't see how that should keep her and her classmates from being friends with the other students in the school. Lea thought there must be a way to change that, but she didn't have the energy to give it anymore thought. So, she took a few bites from her lunch tray, hoping it would give her energy, and scooped the rest into a nearby trashcan.

Lea walked around the school grounds, past unfriendly faces and

began to feel even more disconnected. At the end of the day, she raised her concerns about the lack of inclusion of students with Aspergers in the school with her teacher. Her teacher asked what Lea thought should be done about this issue.

“Um.. well I'm not really sure. We can't make the other students talk to us and sit next to us during lunch,” said Lea.

“That is true, but you can always do things that will make them want to be friends with you,” offered her teacher.

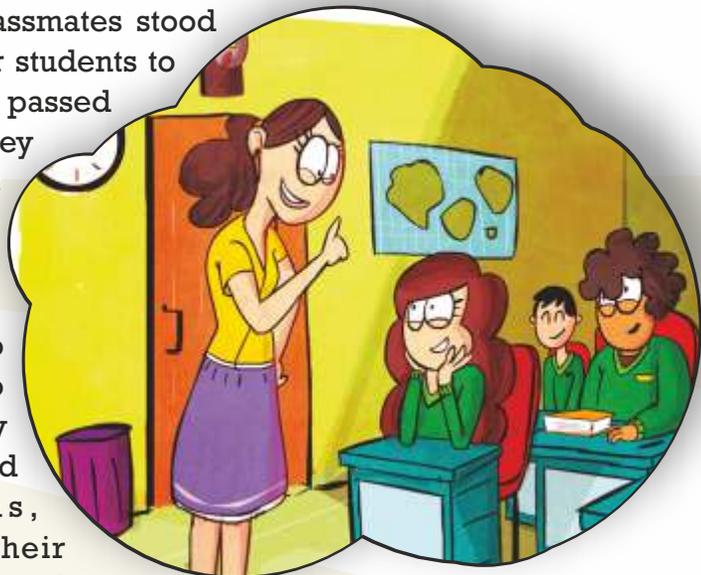
“Yeah..that's true. Oh, maybe we could offer fun activities that would bring the other kids to our class, like show a movie or hold a mixer for the whole school!” said Lea, excitedly.

So Lea and her classmates planned the event with a movie, popcorn, food and drinks, with the help of her teacher and fellow classmates. They advertised all throughout the school for the event.

Soon, the day of the event rolled around, and Lea and her classmates stood excitedly waiting for students to arrive. Ten minutes passed

with no guests, but they remained hopeful as they straightened out the decorations.

After an hour it had become clear that no one was coming to their event. So, they packed up the food and decorations, disheartened by their defeat. However, as they were heading out, one of the boys in the group, Gal called them to a halt.



“Hey, we can't let this one event defeat us, there are so many other

things we can try!” said Gal.

“Yeah, I’m calling a brainstorming meeting tomorrow after school, out on the field!” said Lea.



The next day, Lea and Gal sat on the field waiting for their classmates to gather for the meeting. Once the majority of them had arrived, Lea called the meeting to a start.

“Ok, so the goal of this meeting is to come up with a way to integrate ourselves into the school community, so think of ways that we can bond with the other students and show them that we are not so different from them.” said Lea.

There were several seconds of dead silence until a small girl near the back of the group raised her hand, timidly.

*“Um.. well I think we can all agree that the food in the canteen is bad. It’s oily and there’s lots of sugary junk food and it’s all really bad for my skin. Maybe we could do something with food?” she said.*

When they brought the idea up in class, their teacher Chen asked them what is “healthy food”? They began a learning journey that included keeping a diary of what they ate, vegan cooking lessons with a chef and lectures about the food pyramid.

They began to brainstorm ways to educate their school about

healthier eating options and improving the menu at the school canteen. The group decided they should petition to add fruits and vegetables to the canteen menu, but they were unsure of how to implement this idea. Lea approached her teacher, who helped lead another discussion, wherein the class decided to hold a fair to educate their fellow students and the administration about the importance of eating healthy.

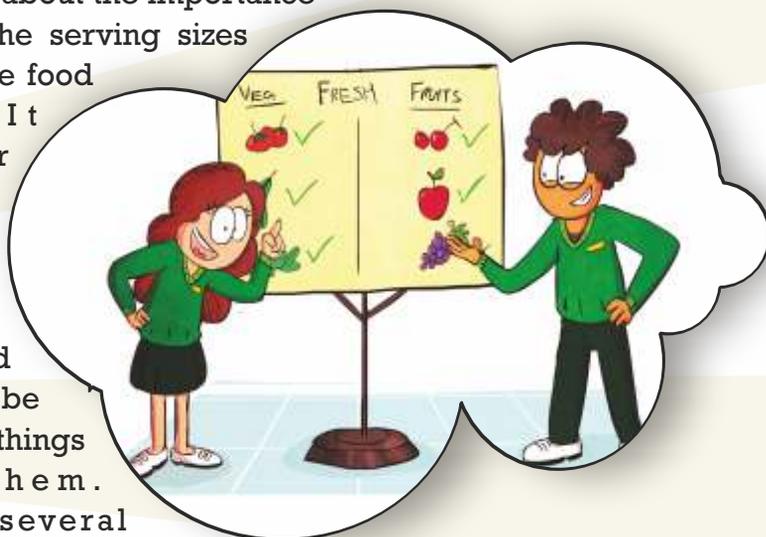
The day of the eating healthy fair arrived! Lea and her friends sat at various booths, with food pyramid charts, cooking supplies and fresh fruits and veggies. Lea and her friends watched as students began to wander up to the booths, mesmerized by the vibrant colors of fresh fruits and vegetables. At Lea's booth, she was educating kids about the importance

of observing the serving sizes provided by the food pyramid.

It surprised her how much her peers didn't know about the importance of nutrition, and it felt great to be able to make things clear for them.

Throughout several hours where the class led the different stations, Lea and her classmates talked to students from the school they had only seen in passing. When time came to pack up the fair, many students were upset, as they all wanted to learn more, from nutritional importance to how to cook healthy and flavorful meals.

The next day, Lea and her classmates sat out on the field recollecting on the past day's events. Everyone talked about how they felt real respect from their fellow students whom they barely





knew. It seemed as though the issue of the food at the canteen was of great concern to all the students, but Lea and her classmates were the only ones brave enough to confront the issue. Lea and her classmates had not only solved the issue of malnutrition in their school, but they had made it clear that they belong to their school's community.

But their greatest thrill was when they were awarded the 'Be the Change' prize at the Design for Change School Challenge. Lea stood on the stage to accept the award and for the first time she and her classmates were being applauded for their accomplishments and not pointed at for being different.

# More Sun, LESS Pollution

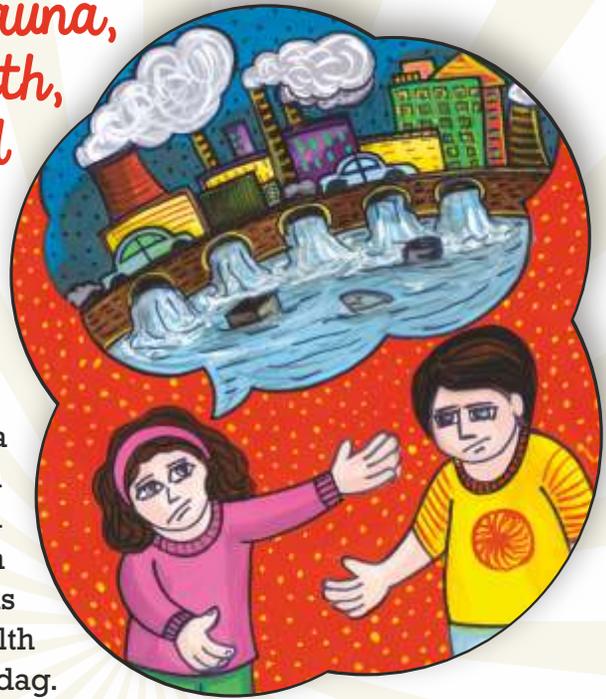
**Armenian Evangelical Secondary School, Lebanon**

Written by: Mansi Chitranshi  
Illustrations by: Anisha Thampy

Towards the east of Lebanon, in the Bekaa valley, in a small village called Anjar, there are a group of students of the Armenian Evangelical Secondary School, discussing a serious topic. That's when Sir Bagdadi, the physics teacher, passed by to question the group about what they were discussing about

*"We're talking here about an impending hazard to flora, fauna, and human health, Sir as we just read the news,"*

exclaimed Iyad. " I see. What's the news?" asked Sir Bagdadi. "A rising struggle is being fought between some developers, here in Bekaa Valley, who want to build a cement plant in the Valley, and Lebanon's escalating green movement, who say the plan has dismal environmental and health consequences," explained Sbidag.



The discussions continued for a while and everyone expressed their respective thoughts on the topic. The group of children also discussed how the level of pollution had been aggregating at an intimidating level. Pollution on the whole is a major issue in Anjar and concerns all residents of the village. There are many different forms of pollution affecting the people, which are clouding the atmosphere and greatly damaging everyone's health.

First of all, air pollution is the biggest danger towards the health of the residents of Anjar village. Toxic and infectious fumes have excessively been transmitted into the atmosphere by generators

and factories. This discharge of toxic fumes must be controlled. The urban development will further pollute the air, but by recycling, less contaminants will be released.

Led by this discussion, Sbidag was determined to “do something” about the situation. She told her class teacher, “I have been worried about the way these generators pollute our environment. Environmental issues definitely include the conservation of the natural beauty of our village, the protection of our ecosystem with all its convolutions, the thoughtfulness to keep our heavily built-up areas as well as our countryside unpolluted and pleasant to see and experience, conserving the quality of our waters and the air that we breathe.”

Her class teacher agreed with her and suggested how Sbidag should consider working on a project around the same issue. “Ma'am Alima, the hot water has run out again. What do we do now?” called out the lady from the kitchen staff, interrupting their conversation. Class teacher expressed displeasure on how this was the third time in a row, that this had happened.

The conversation led Sbidag to a more clear thinking. She thought to herself, “Water is a dynamic but vulnerable resource for all of us in the Anjar village. Climatic conversion has brought about a rise in temperatures, making water insufficiency a mounting problem for the area's environment and economy. I guess it's significant than ever to initiate smart water management practices.”

Sbidag did not lose a moment to meet her class teacher again. “Ma'am, I have a project in mind”, Sbidag tells her teacher. “That's wonderful Sbidag! What's this new project about?” questions her class teacher. Sbidag replies, “Ma'am, when the sun goes down in our village, things move at a slower pace. Though we do have that giant generator, but the polluted fumes it emits and the gory noises it makes is very annoying. I was wondering how we can change this.”

She continued, “There is a realistic resolution, which we can embrace: solar power. Anjar is perfectly suited for hot water production through solar energy: each year, we receive up to 3,000 hours of powerful sunlight, which could be harnessed to provide much-needed energy to remote communities?”

Sbidag's suggestions made a lot of sense. But her class teacher wasn't completely convinced. “That's way too big thing to do and implement Sbidag? This is beyond the bookish concepts,” she said, as she advised her to concentrate on her next term's tests.

*“Ma'am, please hear me out. Using solar hot water can be easily incorporated into most people's lifestyles here in this valley.”*

Once a system is installed and commissioned, it hardly takes any maintenance at all,” Sbidag said to her class teacher, while trying her best to convince her.

Her class teacher couldn't help but think, how she could help Sbidag implement her aspirational project.

Before installing the solar water heaters, some initial preparation needed to be done at school's rooftop where Sbidag planned to set the heater. After clearing away the old equipment on the roof, Sbidag began her work in a full-fledged manner.

She discovered that all the material she required was seen as surplus by industrial units and stores. She went to the vendor of a black tubes factory and persuaded him to give her the unwanted pipes instead of discarding it. At first, the vendor was apprehensive about handing the waste materials to Sbidag. However, when she explained her project, the vendor was more than happy to part away with the surplus equipments. Sbidag, then visited a TV shop

and followed the same procedure to get old TV covers ready to be discarded. Everyone who heard about Sbidag's project, was thrilled. The vendors and shop keepers were more than happy to give Sbidag, the material for free and thus lessen their waste.

Sbidag successfully constructed her first water heating system on the school's rooftop where the students, teachers and the principal were also present.

While addressing a group of people watching what she was doing, Sbidag turns confidently towards the crowd and said, "The concept of a solar water heater is very simple: use the sun to warm up the water. Black tubing is great at absorbing sunlight. We just needed to

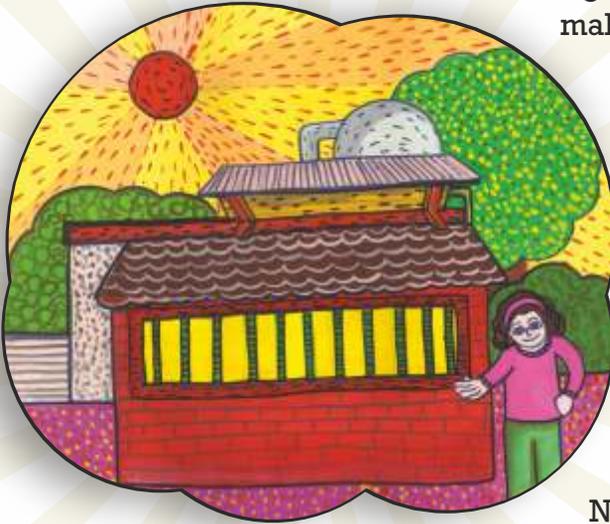


pump the water through a black tubing. Of course, this tubing takes up a lot of space, so I preferred to put it on rooftop," she said.

"So what do we need to do now Sbidag?" enquired the head teacher Amal Salame.

"Ms. Salame, to finish the project accurately, we would need to attach the solar water heaters permanently to the rooftop," explained Sbidag. "Solar water heating systems will use solar panels, called collectors, fitted to our rooftop here. They will collect heat from the sun and use it to heat up the water, which is deposited in a hot water cylinder. We can use a boiler as a gridlock to heat the water further to reach the temperature we want," she added further.

The solar heating solution pioneered in a rural, remote and nonelectrified village like Anjar, by Sbidag has proved that



courage and determination can make you achieve anything you want. Sbidag, not only built the solar heating system but also offered help to fellow residents in fabricating, installing and maintaining solar units through basic knowledge sharing and hands-on practical training.

Not only Sbidag built this solar heating system but also offered help to fellow residents in fabricating, installing and maintaining solar units through basic knowledge sharing and hands-on practical training.

It is expected that there will be no more dearth of warm water in Anjar due to this solar heating system; creating renewable energy from one of Anjar's most copious natural resource - the sun. Sbidag has harnessed solar energy not only to provide warm water but also to save the environment by decreasing carbon emission and not cutting trees, and most significantly, to provide self-sufficient solutions within village life. She was invited to participate in a workshop in Lebanon about renewable energy funded by the European Union. So far, she has further trained several other people from her community on how to create these water heaters.

Today, Anjar village is thriving with hope and motivation.

# Learning to Love Nature

**Vilniaus Antakalnio Progimnazijos, Lithuania**

Written by: Sahana Srinivasan  
Illustrations by: Souradeep Ghosh

It was only Wednesday afternoon but already, Haroldas was dreaming of the weekend and how much basketball he would play. In fact, he was so distracted that he didn't even notice that his favourite nature teacher Neringa had already entered the room.

“Hello class! Today we will be talking about nature and the environment.”

All the students groaned inwardly, wondering which page of the boring textbook they would have to read.

“But let's put those books aside for a second. Why don't you guys tell me what YOU want to change about your life, school or community?”

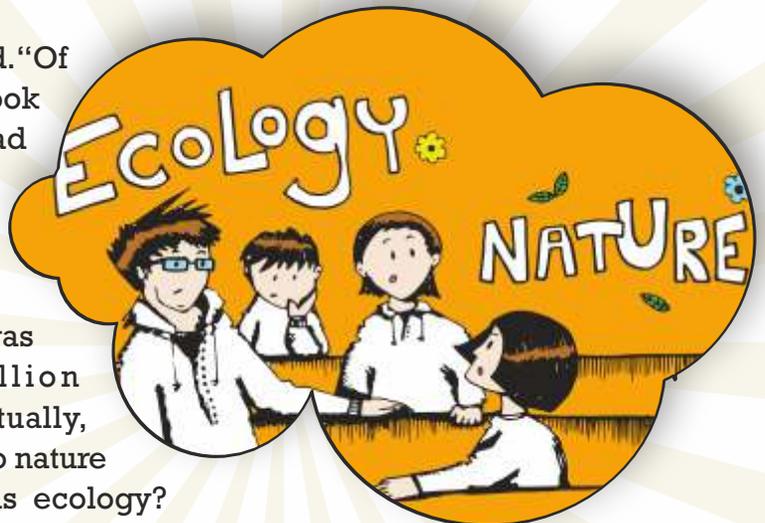
A ripple of surprise went through the room.

*“Wait, you want to know what changes WE want to see and not just see what the book says?”*

Teacher Neringa smiled. “Of course! I've read that book before, but I can't read minds!”

Little by little, the shyness melted away, and soon the room was buzzing with a million different ideas. Eventually, the discussion turned to nature and ecology. What was ecology?

Why is it important? Where is ecology in the school? And how can we save the environment? The class had seen these words in print, but had never consciously thought of it before.



The opportunity to share their personal opinions on an important matter had definitely boosted the interest and excitement of the students and so, teacher Neringa decided to turn this into a much bigger learning moment. She told her class, “Why don't you all go to the school hall and ask your friends what they think? That way we can get some more points of view on the same topic.” As the children headed to the school hall, one of the students, Monika, bumped into the school director, who was surprised to see everyone so lively and energetic. Monika asked him, “So, why do YOU think the environment is important?”

“You know what, that's a really good question! “, he said. “I have to admit, I know nature is important and should be preserved, but I also think it is difficult to save the whole world at once. Why don't we start with just our Vilnius Antakalnis Progymnasium?”

After school, Monika and Haroldas still could not stop talking about how awesome the lesson was. Teacher Neringa was quick to notice this. “Children, should we turn this into a small project? Would some of you like to work on improving the ecology of our school?”



The answer was, as expected, a resounding YES! Monika and Haroldas almost immediately teamed up with their friend Greta from another class, and together, they drew up a plan to make their project a success.

Monika, Haroldas and Greta met with some other teachers and students of the school to find out what they thought of ecology in the

school. From the teachers, they learned that the school participates in waste recycling, where items in the trash are transformed into other useful things. By re-using old items, we do not buy as much, and so, we prevent more trash from piling up.

In the subsequent ecology classes, Neringa taught the class the importance of plant life, and as a fun activity, the class went into the nearby park to plant some seeds in the Earth. They also learned how to water it and take care of the soil so that in the autumn, they would be rewarded with bright orange pumpkins just in time for Halloween!

One day, as Greta was telling her project-mates about how trash can be re-used to make other useful things, Monika noticed that the trash

could be re-arranged to make a cute, little scarecrow. Haroldas saw this and of course, wanted to make one too. "It is super easy!", Monika said. "You just take something round for the head – I used an old tennis ball – and then something else for the body – mine is an old bottle.

Then I just drew a face and made a shirt for him out of craft paper, and look, he's ready! His name is Scarecrow Mo!"



Scarecrow Mo became popular very quickly, and made friends with all the children during the scheduled class hour meet. In this meet, Monika, Haroldas and Greta talked about all the ways in which ecology could be promoted throughout the school. They talked about how each of them could recycle waste and contribute to land

storage even at home. Although their talk was informative, it was not boring at all because they also included many fascinating facts about nature! Finally, the three of them and Scarecrow Mo invited everyone to the Ecology Art Fair.

While each of them pitched by collecting and organizing trash for the Ecology Art Fair, Greta and her friends worked on a big banner for the entrance so everyone would be welcomed in a grand fashion.

On the day of the Ecology Art Fair, the students gathered to marvel at these ingenious little scarecrows made from trash. Haroldas gave a short talk to everyone about all the things he had learned so far in Ecology and Monika taught everyone how they could make their own scarecrows.

At the end of the day, all the students had made a scarecrow of their own, and could not wait to get home and teach their brothers and sisters about all the things they had learned that day. Meanwhile, teacher Neringa, Haroldas and Monika stayed back to clean up. As they sat, exhausted but happy, teacher Neringa asked, “Wow, so we sure learned a lot about ecology, didn't we?”



“Oh yes! I learned that books are good but real-life is better!” said Haroldas, as he played with his Scarecrow.

*“The environment is really important, I think. Without it, we would not have the pretty flowers and the cool animals and birds!” said Monika, munching on a sweet cookie.*

“And if there were no gardens, what would I see when I look out of the window in class?” laughed Haroldas.

# **Books in Motion**

**Escola Ilha Verde, Macau**

Written by: Pooja Lakshman  
Illustrations by: Chih-Ting, Hsu

Half an hour of reading time when school began- we all knew the schedule. Some of us loved it, lived it, and wanted more of it! But how could you finish everything in half an hour?

We went into our classrooms- attendance, roll calls, classes, and it went on long and hard. It was never wrong. It was what we were used to but there really was something better we could have done to keep us interested. Of course, we went out to play during recess, which was fun. Some of us, though, liked to stay in and read during that time. Catch up on all the things we were going to miss out on till the next morning and we only had half an hour with that as well! It wasn't that we didn't like to play, but we wanted to do both. And we could play when we got home!



## *But something miraculous was about to happen!*

There were sessions being conducted on what was the biggest problem every child thought they were all facing- together. So what was it? The never ending sound and noise pollution? The toxic air that we inhaled? The wet floors and accidents during the rain? No, it was something bigger.

And so it began.

We began to change things up a little. We decided that everything else was secondary if one didn't have the knowledge of the real world. So we walked out of classrooms and the library with a few books stacked onto trolleys. After all, what good is reading a great book if you can't share the experience with someone?

But it takes time and hard work to change a system. Over time, we craved for more books, new adventures, new places to travel to, and new experiences with it all. After all, the one way to travel without ever having to move is by reading a book. We decided that if we really wanted to share our experiences with each other- everybody had to contribute to it.



Once everybody contributed to it, we needed to make a way where everyone would be able to have access to the books! So we set up a mobile library. It was a stand that could be pulled around the school and kept at different places so that every child would have access to the books!

During recess time, the mobile libraries were placed in different parts of the school and we wheeled them around to areas we felt that the trolleys had not gone to before. What we saw was fantastic- we not only got new readers this way, we also got many new books and contributions for our libraries! In order to set up reading corners and fun spaces to read, we managed to place beanbags all around the school. We noticed that this was another aspect that brought so many people to our reading corners- they were interested to sit in a nice place, relax, and be transported away by the wonders of their books!



If there was anything more exciting to add to this new wave that had caught the whole school by a spell, it was the teachers who contributed to the books! The principal brought books and added to the compilation itself! And it was wonderful, and it was bliss.

Moreover - word spread, knowledge spread, and there was an air of sharing. Sut Ieng Yun mentioned, " I have lots of books at home but I like reading at school because I can share the joy of reading with others." Beyond that, more children joined forces to reduce the chaos in school without even realising. There were less accidents occurring during recess because children spent their time reading than running and bumping into each other. It was no longer a feared accident-prone zone anymore. It gained the popularity the children wanted it to. Iok Sim Ng said,

*" I hope that we can hold more activities and develop our creativity to solve the problems around us."*

Children who didn't have anything to do went to the book corners and mobile libraries to pick up a book and read. It was the time children from different classes spoke to each other to get honest reviews on what they thought about different topics. It was a time of new beginnings and unlikely friendships and we are sure that it will continue to be that way. After all, aren't books a man's best friend?



# **Include Me**

**Jardín de niños José María Pino Suarez, Mexico**

Written by: Sanika Dhakephalkar  
Illustrations by: René Moya

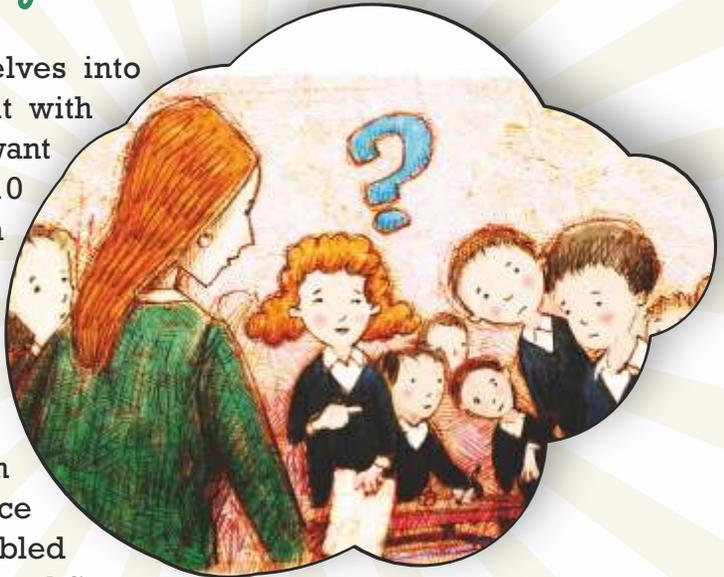
Miss Nuvia watched proudly, as Manuel stood in front of an audience of grown-ups, teachers and other very important people and spoke to them. When he finished speaking, he turned back to his seat with that wide smile that Miss Nuvia had come to know and love sprawled across his face. He was greeted by his best friends—Alexa, Edgar, Juan and Sofia—and Miss Nuvia felt so proud of all of them!

*But she remembered that not so long ago, things were very, very different. Why, these same children wouldn't even speak to Manuel! She remembered the day everything changed.*

“Class! Divide yourselves into groups of four and sit with them at your tables. I want each group to pick 10 words and read them out loud to everyone else. Come on, quick, quick!”

She turned to her register and began marking their attendance as the children scrambled around, chattering. A good five minutes later, when the scraping of the desks and pattering of footsteps had died down, she looked up, and was dismayed at what she saw!

The children had neatly divided themselves up into groups of four,



but Manuel, one of the brightest students in her class, was sitting in the corner all alone! Manuel was not just one of the brightest students in her class, but possibly one of the brightest students in all of Jose Maria Pino Suarez, their kindergarten, which was in Purisima del Rincon, Guanajuato, in Mexico.

Manuel had arrived at the school earlier that year, with the widest smile that Miss Nuvia had ever seen on a little kid. So wide, in fact that, she didn't even notice that he had no eyes. You see, Manuel was the school's first and only visually impaired student. Miss Nuvia was reassured by the smile and was sure Manuel would make friends very quickly. Unfortunately, she hadn't anticipated how the other students would react.

The children had divided themselves into their little groups of four, but nobody had thought of including poor Manuel! Miss Nuvia walked over to his desk and took him resolutely by the hand to where Edgar, Sofia, Alexa and Juan were sitting. They were the brightest and the most popular kids in her class, and Miss Nuvia wanted them to befriend Manuel.



"Manuel will be a part of your your group, Edgar," she told them. As she was walking back to her desk, Sofia piped up.

"Miss...?" she began.

"Yes, Sofia?"

"Miss...But Manuel can't see. How will he read the words?"

Miss Nuvia smiled. She was glad Sofia had asked her that. She knew that the only way to make the children understand was for them to

see for themselves that Manuel was just like the rest of them. "Manuel can read just like you Sofia. Here, I'll show you. Manuel, can you read the first word on the page in front of you, please?"

The children peered over each other's heads to see what Manuel would do. Manuel ran his fingers across the page in front of him and said out loud, "K-I-T-T-E-N. Kitten." He grinned as he recognized the word and looked pleased with himself.

"How did you do that?!" Alexa exclaimed, looking at Manuel in awe. "There are no words here at all!" She was peering into Manuel's book, and was soon joined by the rest of the group. Miss Nuvia asked Juan to touch it.

"What do you feel?" she asked him. "I feel little bumps, Miss," he replied, confused.

*"Those bumps are letters that make words that make sentences just like the ones in your book. You can read your books, but Manuel can feel his. This language of dots is called Braille."*

She handed Manuel's book back to him and wrote, "BRAILLE" on the chalkboard. Everyone carefully copied the word down into their notebooks.

Alexa was still restless. She turned to Manuel. "Do you read all your books in Braille? Do you have more books like this?" she demanded.

"Yes!" Manuel replied, happily. "All my books are like this. What are your books like? Do you have lots of books? I do! I love to read stories. I like listening to songs too! Sometimes my mom writes down the words of the songs for me and I read when I listen, and then..."

The rest of the group had abandoned their work and they were listening to Manuel with rapt attention, as he chattered away. They had so many questions for him! Miss Nuvia was thrilled. This was exactly what she'd hoped for!

As the days passed, Miss Nuvia encouraged the four children to spend more and more time with Manuel, and she was delighted to see that they loved him! She heard him and Alexa talk about dancing and was overjoyed when he and Juan started singing their favourite rhymes together. By the end of the week, they were all thick as thieves!

Edgar, Sofia, Alexa and Juan were in awe of Manuel, because he knew everything they knew and he couldn't see any of the things they did. But he felt just as keenly as them, and they were glad they had made friends with him. Manuel was finally at home in her class, but she knew that the rest of the world wasn't as kind as the children in her class. She decided to talk to them about it



"Children, Manuel is your friend, isn't he? You know he can't see like you can, but still you made friends with him anyway! But you know, it's not just people who can't see. There are people who can't hear, some people can't walk. Why, some people can't move their hands! And sometimes, people get scared because they don't understand that these people are just as beautiful as they are. They don't talk to them, or they treat them very badly. Can you imagine if someone did that to our Manuel?"

The children looked aghast. "People are mean!" Sofia exclaimed. "Manuel is nice and they aren't, and I'm never going to make friends

with these bad people." She huffed.

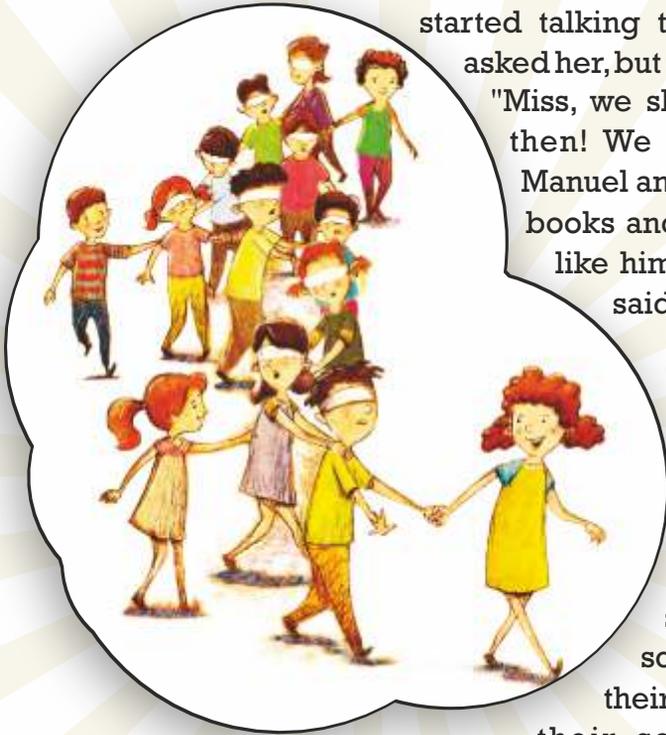
"But Sofia, you weren't friends with Manuel until you started talking to him, right?" Miss Nuvia asked her, but it was Juan who answered.

"Miss, we should talk to these people then! We should make them meet Manuel and he can tell them about his books and his dancing and they will like him just like us. I know it." He said, resolutely.

"Maybe you're right, Juan. Would you like to talk to them? All of you?"

And that's how they had begun their project. They spoke to children in other schools, to their teachers, to their parents and to everyone in their community, all about the

valuable lessons that Manuel had taught them. Alexa, Edgar, Juan and Sofia blindfolded the other students and guided them so that they could understand what Manuel's life was like. Miss Nuvia felt like the proudest teacher in the entire universe! As Manuel spoke the words that had inspired her and her class so much, Miss Nuvia knew that everyone who was listening would finally understand the little boy with the widest smile.



# Eliminating Garbage

**Santa Teresa de Villa, Peru**

Written by: Pooja Lakshman

Illustrations by: Amrita K

It was a different kind of day, they could all sense it. There was something different in the air- perhaps it was change. The change that was going to be brought about by those who did not even know they could make the difference just yet.

Gabriela and Roger were discussing earlier about what the one thing could change about their surrounding would be. Did they care more about the books they read- the ignorance, the water that could get polluted, the electricity? No, it went deeper than that.

Lic. Elbis Abbey helped them understand what it was that these young bright minds wanted to change and tried to get them as close to their goal as possible- it was the garbage and the cleanliness that was associated with it!



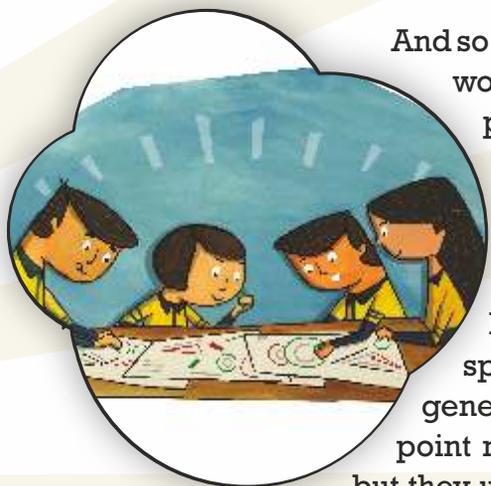
And so it began. Percy told Shirley, who told Gabriela, who told Francisca and the grapevine continued. The wind of change was flowing in through the bubbling excitement and the igniting ideas to and from each student that the news spread to. They were going to create a community and a space where they would eliminate the garbage and ensure that they lived in a beautiful, sustainable place.



The children, together, held presentations and brought their plan under the radar of the rest of their teachers. With the approval of their principal, there was a brainstorming session between the children and the teachers!

But that was not enough, obviously. "If there has to be complete support and participation for this project, the others have to be involved too!", said Roger. And so he went with his supporting friends from classroom to classroom inviting the rest of the school and his peers to participate. They wanted something big to happen, and the change had to take place right here and right now!

The teachers did their part as well to help the young superheroes. They invited the parents to be a part of the change and spread the word to other parents to come about and help with the project that their own children had taken an initiative in.



And so each student, their parents and teachers worked tirelessly to make the banners, to plan the parade, and clean up after the mess continuously. The miraculous change was instantaneous! It was true. If you do something enough number of times, it becomes a habit. Cleaning became a habit indeed. The school was spotless and there was no more trash generally lying about. The students made it a point not only to clean up outside the school

but they understood that it began from their own classrooms itself! And so every day, after school, they spent a bit of time gathering all their things together, putting them in place and moving on to the corridors and outside.

On the 23rd of September, the children were able to carry out their plan of complete promotion and awareness. With the support of their parents and teachers, the entire school was ready and abuzz to walk outside with their

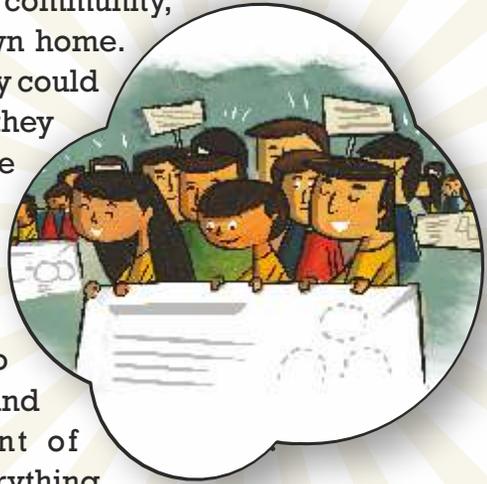


heads held high, to deliver one of the most important messages. And so the parade began. All of the school held their banners that spoke of the importance of cleaning up, or recycling, or just chanted about how

## *'Cleanliness is next to godliness!'*

Christian and Percy came back flushed with adrenaline. "It was unbelievable! Even our neighbours came outside to see what was happening", they exclaimed. Their plan had worked! They wanted, by this parade, to highlight the importance of cleanliness not only to members of the community who were related to their school, but to anybody and everybody in their community.

The focus shifted from school, to the community, and to the most important- one's own home. The little champions realised that they could make a change no matter where they were. What mattered the most was the idea, the rest would fall into place. Through their project, they achieved teamwork and awareness.



They realised that all they needed to do was join hands with each other and continue with the same amount of momentum as they had before! Everything worked out in the end, didn't it? They achieved their goal and their parents came to school every month even to help them as a part of this drive.

"It doesn't matter how old you are or where you come from", Shirley said, "It only matters how big you want your plan to be!" How right she was. Her peers and her continue to go around their school conducting various presentations on what other aspects they need to focus on. But more than that, they go to different schools now to talk about the importance of what they believe in and how to achieve it.



# **Cleaning up Concepcion**

**Concepcion National High School, Philippines**

Written by: Sitara Menon/ Juanita Naidoo  
Illustrations by: Souradeep Ghosh

Palawan is a tropical island paradise! It is one of the 7107 islands of the Philippines, and is home to a rare kind of beauty-sparkling blue



seas, lush green forests, banyan trees, underground rivers, coral reefs, indigenous tribes and people with hearts as wide as the oceans. Yet like other places in the Philippines, it is also home to environmental damage and annual typhoons. Such contrasts make Palawan quite a remarkable place so it is no surprise that it is home to a very remarkable young girl-Shiena Mae Catubig. She lives in

Concepcion, Busuanga, an area in Northern Palawan that was struck by Typhoon Yolanda in December 2013.

Shiena Mae, like many of her friends was at home when the typhoon struck. The walls shook, the wind howled and the rain pounded down upon the earth. Shiena Mae clung to her mother and was very, very afraid. As the tears rolled down her face, she asked herself,

*' Why is this happening? Are my friends okay?' She prayed that her closest friends Jane, Marilou and Krisette were not hurt.*

She knew in her heart, that when she walked out of her home the next morning, she was going to see a lot of damage.

She was right. Concepcion was a mess! There were broken trees, roads, bridges and even the Concepcion National High School was damaged too! Oh no! As she stood there looking at it all, Shiena Mae closed her eyes and thought about the Concha festival day when everyone celebrated their beautiful island in colourful display,

procession. She wished that her home could be clean, radiant and beautiful just like the pure, white pearl celebrated during the festival.

Over the next few weeks, the villagers worked hard to rebuild the broken buildings and soon the school was open again. Shiena Mae was so excited when she joined her friends at school-she had missed them so much! Yet after a month or so, she started to get cross about a problem that was bothering her.

*“Momya”, she said turning to her mother  
“Everything was such a mess after  
Yolanda. We worked very hard to clean  
up our town, but now I can see a big,  
messy problem!”*

Why don't we have bins at school to throw our trash?” Momya looked at Shiena in surprise and said, “I don't know Iha, but maybe you should think about it a little bit. Ay! I wish these mosquitos would stop biting us!”

The next day Shienna Mae could barely wait to get her friends together at school and to talk to them about the problem. She started chatting with Jane who could always be counted on for good ideas, “Jane, have you noticed that we just throw our wrappers and cups on the floor at school? I think that nobody has any respect for the environment we live in.” Jane thought about it for a minute and said, “Ha? Actually I think you could be right. I was being eaten alive by mosquitoes yesterday while watching TV and I was thinking that it might have something to do with all the trash and dirty water everywhere. Isn't that what Ms Lucero was telling us in Social Science class that day?” Marilou jumped right into the conversation, “I was visiting Lola (grandma) in her village during the summer and everything felt better there. The water felt cleaner and I never had to hop around to avoid trash. Nobody ever

complained about it either because, well it simply wasn't there."

The three girls went on and on about it until they noticed Krisette getting quite angry with them. Trying to draw her into the conversation, Shiena Mae said, "Krisette, you've been awfully quiet. Is everything ok?" Krisette was trying not to shout (but she did anyway) and burst out "We are just like the elders in this town. You have all been sitting here and complaining about the same problem we have noticed for so long. That's all anybody ever does-complain, complain, complain!"

The others got angry about this unfairness from their best friend and Jane yelled back, "Hoy! We're only children what can we do?" Suddenly, Shiena Mae, started laughing and her friends wondered whether she had really lost her mind. Between her howls of laughter she said, "Hahaha! I completely forgot the best part. I got so caught



up in being upset about the trees and heaps of garbage... hahaha...that I forgot to tell you my plan. I've got an adventure planned for us. We're going to create bins for the trash that is getting dumped on the floor at our school!"

The next morning the girls woke up early and raided their houses for sacks, then their neighbours homes too. Every time an adult asked them what they were up to, they happily replied,

*"We're cleaning up Concepcion!"*

The girls made a heap of all their sacks in Shiena Mae's house, ignoring her big brother's shouts of dismay. They spent the next week walking around their school and town, dreaming of a perfect place without heaps of trash and finding the spots they wanted to clean up most quickly. They spent whatever time they could after school to make posters to help others understand what kind of garbage would go in the different sacks. They sang as they worked

and their enthusiasm was infectious- soon more and more students in their class started to help out.

After lots of preparations, the Day of Action finally arrived! It was time for the girls to make their dream a reality! They gathered up a few friends and gave them clear instructions. All of the kids then got together to separate the garbage and put them in the right bags that they nailed against trees. It was a long day of hard



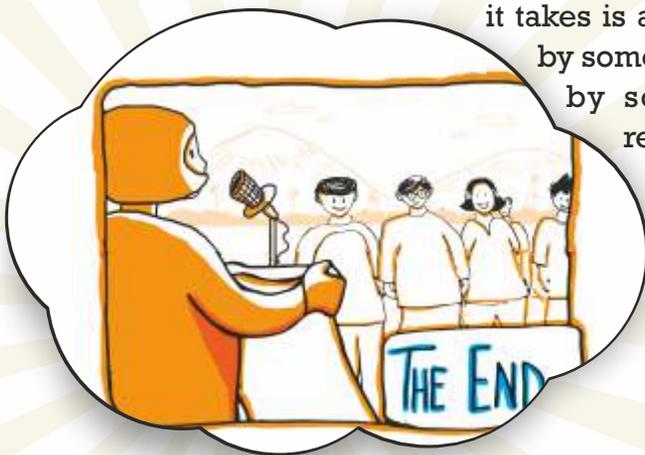
work; every child went home that day exhausted but jubilant. This patch of Concepcion was everything they had dreamed of with its clear, litter free view as far as their little eyes could see. There were no musty smells and as Marilou tentatively remarked, there suddenly seemed fewer mosquitoes to be bitten by.

Their teacher Ms Bucong noticed the efforts the four friends made and invited them to talk about it at the school assembly. Shiena Mae was beaming as she told her whole school about what they had been doing and how the entire school could come together every Saturday to make the entire island beautiful again. They could turn the tables and teach the elders something too-how to care for the environment. At the assembly she said with pride, "I feel wonderful! The mere fact that at my age I am able to lead something to change is a great accomplishment" going on to encourage other people to feel the same way about themselves. As she stood there brimming with pride, Shiena Mae remembered how distraught she felt during the typhoon. Recognizing the big change in herself, she felt even prouder. Later that day during Reflection time, she thought about the questions that had gone through her mind as the storm raged, "Why is this happening? Are my friends okay?" and realized that even though the storm was so scary, she had learned that she was not helpless. She also decided that her friends were not just okay-

they were her Kaya Ko (I Can) buddies and she grinned remembering all the ups and downs that happened along the way. No matter what, and especially when things went 'wrong' someone would remember to chant 'Kaya Ko, Kayo Ko, Kaya Natin Ito (We can together!)

Now the entire school comes together before the flag ceremony on Saturdays to Clean Up Concepcion. There are mothers, fathers, uncles, aunties, little brothers and big, little and big sisters, neighbors, friends and even some tourists coming every Saturday to join the fun. With eduSOIL, D Divers, Puerto del Sol Resort and D Pearl Bay Busuanga supporting their Saturday clean ups, Shiena Mae is happy to report that "Cleaning up Concepcion" is quickly becoming a weekly local festival.

Now, who thought a clean up drive could be such an adventure? All it takes is a little feeling followed by some imagining, supported by some doing, sharing, reflecting and then some fun and enjoyment to sustain the change!





**“I’m here”**

**Agrupamento de Escolas Vale Tamel, Portugal**

Written by: Pooja Yadav  
Illustrations by: Anisha Thampy

On a fine, windy evening, Eva went to the park to play with her friends. Today was a particularly pleasant day as the sun hid mysteriously behind the feathery clouds and the air was cooler than usual. Eva and her friend Maria decided to play badminton, while Rafael and Juno brought out their rugby ball to play catch. Eva was a great badminton player and she would go to the park everyday to play. Maria was not so sporty, and this was the first time in two weeks that she had stepped outside her house to get some exercise.

Eva was extremely pumped as she waited for Maria to serve the shuttlecock. She followed it strenuously with her eyes, despite the wavering wind, and swung her racquet to attempt a smash shot. With a gush of wind, the shuttlecock was flown too far away for Maria to even spot it anymore. The wind was getting worse, as if a storm was brewing. The girls immediately knew that they couldn't continue playing badminton and decided to join the guys after they'd located the shuttlecock.

“I don't know where it went!” exclaimed Maria.

“I didn't see it either. Must be this wind. You go look on your right, I'll look for it on the other side,” Eva responded.



The weather was definitely getting rougher as the trees started swaying faster and the sand started blowing in their faces.

*Eva then stumbled upon a girl who she recognized was about the same age as her. She was holding the shuttlecock and had a rather puzzled look on her face.*

“Here it is!” sighed Eva. “Can I have that back, if you don't mind? My friend and I were playing when we lost the shuttlecock because of the wind.”

The girl looked at Eva for a brief moment and then shied away. Refraining from making eye contact, she handed the shuttlecock back to Eva.

Eva thanked her but the girl did not respond. She knew she had seen her around the park a lot, but never with anybody else. Eva, being the friendly person that she was, wanted to introduce herself but this girl would just not look at her. As soon as Eva put her hand forward, asking for a handshake, the girl got up and ran away to this nearby facility. Eva looked confused and followed her. The facility was right next to the park, and read “Structured Teaching Unit for students with Autism Spectrum Disorder.” The guard would not let Eva enter, but she had an idea.

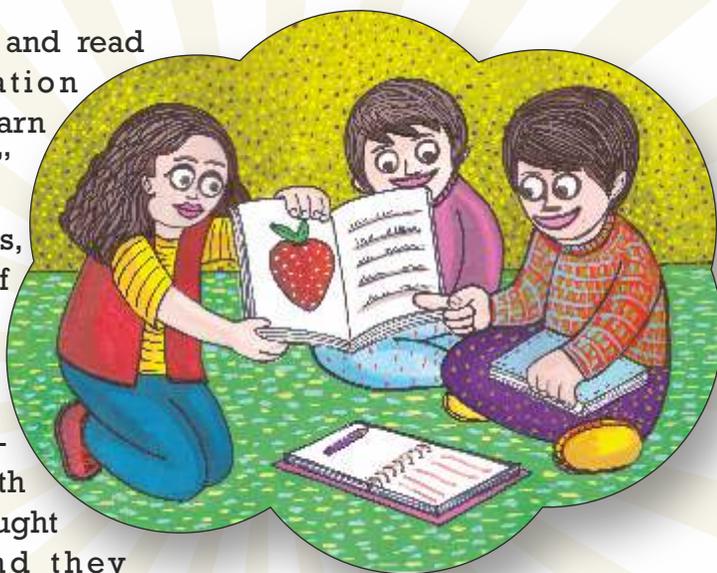
She went back that evening and thought about her experience. She knew that the best person to tell her more and satiate her curiosity was her teacher, Miss Julia. Since Eva had always been an eager, sensitive student, Miss Julia was not surprised Eva wanted to visit that place. Miss Julia decided to make it an educational trip for the class since they had talked about the Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in class several times during the year and the children all seemed intrigued by those sessions.

A few special education teachers showed the lot of 7th grade students, along with their teacher, around the Structured Teaching Unit (STUA). The children showed thorough interest in learning about the different areas of the unit and their functions. The most interesting for them was the area of communication. They learned that out of the seven students who attend this STUA, only two could speak. The rest used alternative methods of communication such as signs and symbols.

Eva's interest in this facility did not end with the education trip. When she saw the girl from the park at the facility, she decided she wanted to be involved in some way with the STUA and befriend this girl. With her enthusiastic tone, she put forth an idea to her friends.

“Why don't we try and read their communication books? We could learn some sign language!”

So in smaller groups, in the discipline of Visual Education, the class analyzed the communication books used by non-verbal students with ASD. The books caught their interest and they instantly started thinking of alternate solutions for the same.



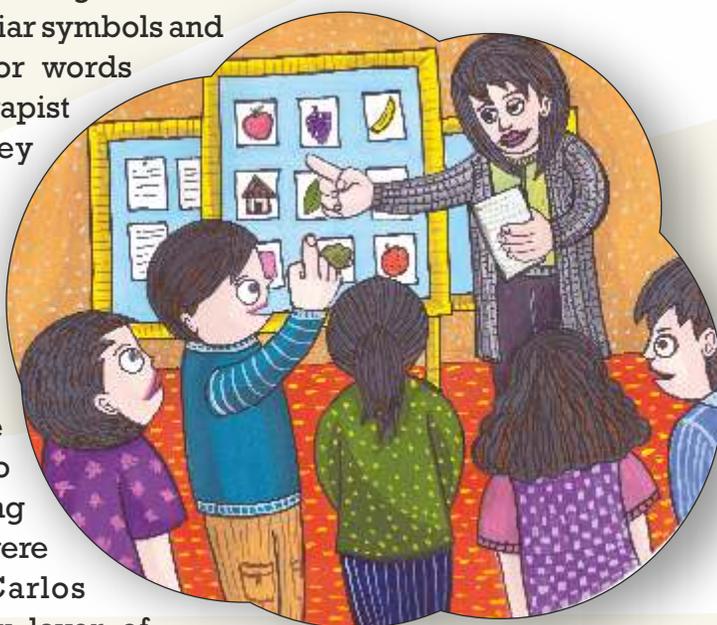
*“Maybe we could come up with more concrete, easy-to-understand icons!” suggested Rafael.*

Another child suggested that they should approximate the colors and shapes of objects from the daily lives of these students and make easy icons with those.

Following an extremely pumped up and productive discussion amongst the classmates, they also thought of coming up with pictograms corresponding to each word.

They would use familiar symbols and make pictograms for words that the speech therapist had suggested they should work on.

When they were working on this project, Miss Julia brought in Professor Carlos (head of the Robotics Club) to show him the amazing work her children were doing. Professor Carlos added a whole new layer of innovation to this project by introducing the students to a phone application.



“How many of you have heard of the Android interface for phones?” he asked the class. Every single child raised his/ her hand. “That makes it much easier for me to explain to you what I’m about to.” He then went on to tell them about a surprisingly easy to use application called SpeakByMe. This application would allow anybody to insert a word and a corresponding picture into the phone, and ASD patients can easily replay the image and hear the sound. Since this process was extremely easy, the students instantly went ahead and downloaded the application to their Android phones.

“Photograph the pictogram we have made for the list of words and then record the word with your voice. As easy as 1 – 2 – 3!” exclaimed Eva in joy, while presenting this application and their new reimagined pictograms at the Structured Teaching Units. The teachers helped the ASD students try this application.

*Eva's face lit up when her new friend Betty looked at her with a glint of happiness while replaying the word "park" on her phone application.*



# **No Bullying in School**

**West View Primary School, Singapore**

Written by: Dhruv Verma  
Illustrations by: René Moya

“Stop!” yelled Mathew, trying to stop Justin and Jason.

Justin and Jason tried to run, but the three fit bullies were already upon them, pinning their arms behind their backs and holding them still.

“Hold them,” ordered Mathew.

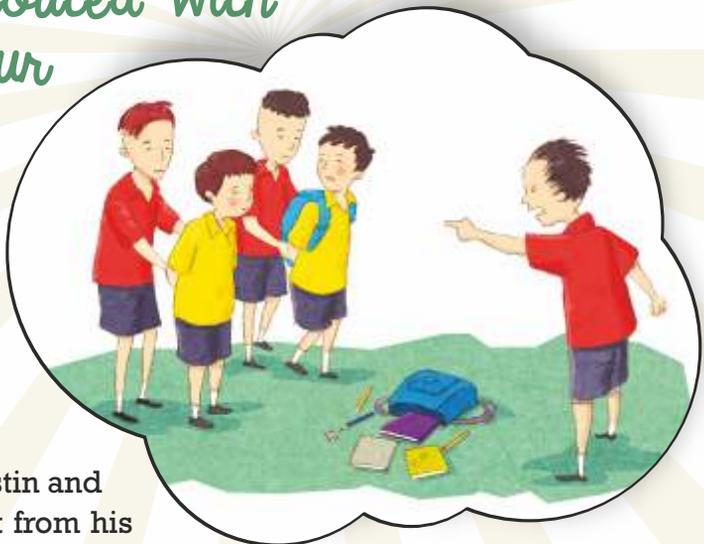
Gary and Philip were unsure if this was the right thing to do but they eventually held on to Justin and Jason obediently as told. Mathew ripped Justin's and Jason's bags of their shoulders and flung them away. Gary and Philip looked at each other with uncertainty. They knew what they were doing was wrong -- Matthew was being a big bully while they were both acting as Matthew's accomplices! However, Gary and Philip didn't dare let Justin and Jason go, for fear of Mathew who would surely punish them.

*“What do you want?” cried Jason, trying to fight the strong grip of Philip's arms.*

*Mathew shouted with glee. “All your money!”*

“W-we don't have any m-money,” stammered Justin, eyes squeezed shut.

Mathew grabbed Justin and pulled out his wallet from his pocket.



Mathew screamed in his face. "What is this? You think you can lie to me?"

Infuriated, Mathew landed a hard punch into his stomach, making Justin double over in pain. The lead bully hit him again and again, until Jason finally shouted, "Stop! Don't hit him!"

Mathew walked slowly over to Jason, and snatched his wallet from him as well.

*"You've got guts, don't you?" sneered the bully, as tears streamed down Justin's face behind him.*

As Mathew leaned in to intimidate him, Jason spat a ball of spit straight into his face, splatting on his cheek. Mathew roared with anger and landed two hard punches in Jason's face, and kned him in the stomach.

"You can't take ... our wallets," croaked Jason.

"And what are you going to do about it, huh?" replied Mathew. "Losers!"

Mathew shoved both of them to the ground and walked away with his goons, laughing at their victims.

Justin and Jason tried to forget what happened that day, for fear of the bullies and embarrassment at what their friends would think if they found out. Jason wore an eye patch to hide his black eye, claiming it was an eye infection. Even their parents had no idea about what happened that day. Every day, Justin and Jason would run home to avoid the bullies.

"We can't continue like this," said Jason courageously. "We have to tell a teacher."

“B-but what will the bullies do if they find out?” asked Justin.

“We'll just have to wait and see” replied Jason.

The two boys approached Mr. Namdi, their rugby coach who coached the bullies as well. They told him briefly about the incident, and Mr. Namdi was infuriated.

“This is outrageous! Come with me. We'll go talk to them,” said their rugby coach, protecting Justin and Jason.



They approached the three bullies as they were warming up for rugby training, stretching their legs and passing the ball between them. As soon as they saw Mr. Namdi's face, they knew they were in trouble.

*“Did you three take Justin's and Jason's wallets?! Did you beat them up?!” yelled Mr. Namdi.*

There was no reply from the boys, all three staring at their feet with shame.

Mr. Namdi shouted again. “I asked you a question! If you don't want to own up, I can call your parents or the police!”

Gary replied, “Sorry Mr. Namdi, but it wasn't me, sir. Philip and I

were forced to help Mathew take their wallets. We didn't want to! Right, Philip?"

"Yes Mr. Namdi. It was not our intention. We didn't hit them at all. Mathew is the bully who assaulted them and stole their money," added Philip.

"Is this true, Mathew?" asked the rugby coach.

"Yes, sir," replied Mathew, not raising his head.

"Is this your first time assaulting others?" asked Mr. Namdi, not dropping his stern voice.

"Yes, Mr. Namdi," replied Mathew.

"Fine then! Since it is your first time, I want you to apologise to them sincerely and I will let you go. And you must return their wallets!" Mr Namdi concluded.

The five boys shook hands and apologized sincerely to Justin and Jason. They started out as bullies and victims of bullying but walked away as a group of friends.



The five boys grew to be best friends, despite the bullying incident. Looking back on their actions, Mathew, Philip and Gary realised that what they had done to Justin and Jason was a serious wrongdoing. Philip and Gary reflected that day, and realized that they should not have been scared to help out the victims of bullying. They should have stood up for themselves and for the victims. They would have caused less damage to all parties and helped solve the problem of bullying. Philip and Gary wanted to share with others that standing up for what's right is important and that by being a bystander or accomplice in bullying was violent and wrong.

As the group grew closer, they also started to recognise that bullying was happening around school. They decided to implement change in their school to decrease the rate of bullying. Working as a team, they created “No Bullying” zones in common areas like the canteen. This helped to increase and raise awareness among students that bullying is wrong and that everyone has the power to take action to stop bullying from happening.



They created a video to show how bullying can be treated, and that bullies can be given a second chance, just like how the five of them overcame the bullying experience to become good friends.

Lastly, the group created a Buddy Support Team, pairing a lower Primary student with an upper Primary student to give them support and solutions if they were being bullied. This also helped the lower Primary students to adapt better at school.

*These five students - especially Philip and Gary - changed their approach from "Can We?" to "We Can!"*

# Conversations with the Earth

**Shea O' Connor Combined School, South Africa**

Written by: Semanti Ray  
Illustrations by: Rahul Samani

It was an exceptionally hot day in the midlands of KwaZulu-Natal, and not a single leaf seemed to be moving in and around the compound of Shea O' Connor Combined School.

Vusu thought longingly of sticks of sugary Crazy Pops and cans of icy Sparletta as he slowly made his way back to the classroom after recess. He definitely didn't look forward to sitting through hours of mathematics and geography in the sweltering heat.

"...I hadn't even noticed, had you?"

Vusu started guiltily as he realized that he hadn't heard a word that Nkulu had said.

"I'm sorry, noticed what?"

Nkulu gave him a long suffering look and repeated. "I was talking about the environmental science lesson that we had right before recess. I hadn't even realized how dry and barren our school grounds are and how our school garden is actually draining the nearby wetlands, until Ms Mkhabela pointed it out!"

*Vusu shrugged, kicking a stone out of his way. "I wasn't really paying attention. I'm always the hungriest in the class right before recess and can never concentrate."*



“Eish! Come on, Vusu! Ms Mkhabela was talking about our school and our grounds-- not random faraway rainforests and animals we've never seen! How can you not care about how our school is affecting our environment? Don't you worry about how we are to stop the damage?”

Vusu held his hands out defensively. “It's not my fault that all I can think about in Environmental Science is my lunch! Now, if Ms Mkhabela talked about food instead of the environment, then it would probably be easier...”

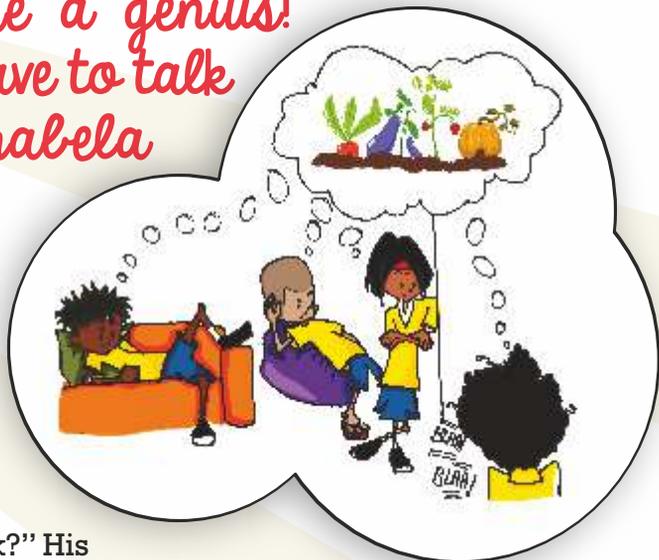
Nkulu snorted. “Yeah, Ms Mkhabela should talk about braai and beans and rusks instead of the wetlands and...”

Vusu looked curiously at his friend who had abruptly stopped walking and looked thunderstruck.

“Nkulu? What is it? Why did you stop?”

*“Vusu...you're a genius!  
That's it! I have to talk  
to Ms Mkhabela  
right now!”*

Vusu stared in bewilderment as Nkulu dashed into the school building ahead of him.



“So, what do you think?” His classmates and friends stared at the plan Nkulu had outlined on the board in their Environmental Science class, while Ms Mkhabela looked on proudly.

Wendy was the first to answer. "I think that's brilliant! This way, instead of just studying about the environment, we actually do something to help our planet!"

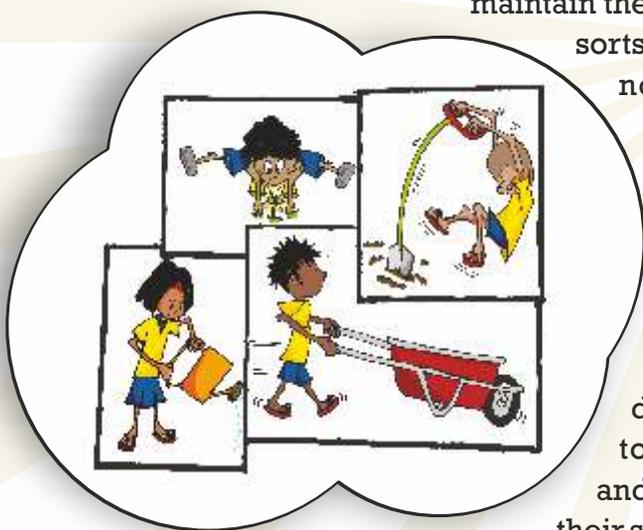
Nkulu looked at Vusu sitting in the second row, who was all ears in Environmental Science for once. Vusu grinned back at him. Nkulu had done the very thing Vusu had wanted: he had come up with a plan that married food and sustainability.

Over the next few weeks, Nkulu and his friends Vusu, Wendy, Qiniso and Sanele went to work on the school grounds. With the help of the Midlands Meander Education Project (MMAEP), they created gardens all over the school grounds and formed a garden club to

maintain their work. They planted all sorts of vegetables that would

not only help feed the learners, but would also help the environment.

They also joined the Eco-Schools (ES) programme and learned about climate change. Together, they decided to step up efforts to protect the wetlands and fenced the area near their school.



It was time to take their project to the next level.

"Nkulu, I've been thinking. There are only so many of us, while the work never ends. Don't you think we should talk to the rest of the school about joining us?"

Nkulu beamed at Sanele, glad that his friend was taking such an active interest in the future of their project.

With permission from their teachers, Nkulu made an

announcement at assembly. His call for help from the rest of the school was answered so promptly, that they formed an eco-committee to teach the other learners about creating gardens with support from MMAEP.

Soon they had the whole school joining their efforts to make the school grounds sustainable and help protect the nearby wetlands and the environment.

Nkulu and his friends took their story to ES award ceremonies through dance, drama and presentations, so that even more people were inspired to take up their cause.

They had learned how to garden, compost, make mulch, save seeds, take care of the wetlands and keep the environment clean, safe and healthy.

*And along with that, they learned how to work together as a team with people of different ages, genders and backgrounds.*

They eventually received the fruits of their labour. In 2010, five years after they had begun working on this project, they were awarded the International Green Flag in recognition of their work. Their principal was so motivated by the wonderful work done by the learners, she converted the flower bed in front of her office into a vegetable bed growing spinach and peas.

Thanks to Nkulu's efforts, all of Shea O' Connor Combination School started appreciating the benefits of eating green and local.

To ensure sustainability, the learners involved more and more people who were inspired by their work and pledged their support to the movement. The other clubs too evinced an interest in becoming involved with this project.

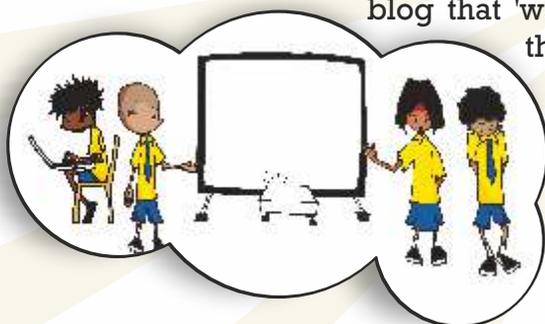
In 2013, when Nkulu was in grade 12, the class remade the garden as a gift to their principal. Grade 6 was in charge of taking care of the wetlands, at that point.

Nkulu and his friends paved the way for hundreds of others in their community, to do their bit in protecting and preserving the environment.

It was a rainy afternoon in the midlands of KwaZulu-Natal. Just the sort of weather that the Inkanyamba, the great water monster of Zulu legends, was likely to feel excited about.

Nkulu and his group of young learners had returned from a hike just in time to avoid the downpour and sat indoors talking about the many wonderful things they had observed on their hike.

“I think I understand now what you meant when you wrote on your blog that 'walking is a conversation with the earth.' I don't feel as close to Mother Earth at any other time as when I'm walking through her forests, near her wetlands, by her rivers.”



“I'm glad you do, Lwazi. The more conversations people have with Mother Earth, the less

likely they are to treat her carelessly or disrespectfully.”

“Is that why you still visit the school and take us on hikes and expeditions, Nkulu? So that we can have conversations with Mother Earth?”

Nkulu smiled at the group hanging on to his every word. “Yes, that's part of it; but part of it is also selfish. While there is much to be said about having one-on-one conversations with Mother Earth, watching the seeds you planted years and years ago grow into the most wonderful institutes has its own joy. Who knew, that a fourth grader's hungry tummy and desire to protect the environment would eventually bear such satisfying fruits?”



**welcome to  
Santa Teresa de Jesús**

**Colegio Santa Teresa de Jesús - El Vedat, Spain**

Written by: Valmik Kumar  
Illustrations by: René Moya

School is a difficult time for everyone. With every passing year, schoolwork becomes harder, your campus is new, big and scary, and people you have never met before surround you. Everything around you is changing. Inside of you, adolescence takes you on the journey from childhood to adulthood, and that, alone, is quite a bumpy road. It is a time when it is very easy to feel alone and misunderstood.

Everyone has their own stories of taking those first few tentative steps in school.

*There is a girl who carries her books close to her chest, keeps her head down and lets her hair hide her face.*



She's new to the school, new to all the faces looking at her with varying levels of curiosity. The campus is huge, intimidating with its long hallways and endless classrooms. The hustle and bustle around her builds up from the quiet humdrum of idle chatter to the roar of the whole world talking into her ear. She walks as quickly as she can into her new classroom.

There is a boy who's had to leave all of his friends behind to come to the big city to go to school here. He used to live in a little town a few

hours north of Valencia, but his family knew that it was best for his education to come here to learn. He knows no one, and the whole city rears up at him like a great big question mark that he cannot answer. He follows the shy looking girl into their classroom.

What they see, makes them stop in their tracks.

They expected to see their teacher standing at the front of the class, austere, wearing glasses and textbook in hand. Or maybe their teacher would be warm and friendly, a little round in the stomach and red in the cheeks. Instead, they see four young people standing at the front of the class, smiling broadly.

One of them, a boy with short blonde hair, spoke up first.



“Hola! I bet you thought you were going to have class today, didn't you?” There was a general murmur of acknowledgement that swept around the class. The boy grinned and continued. “Well, that's not how we do things here at Santa Teresa de Jesús el Vedat de Torrent.”

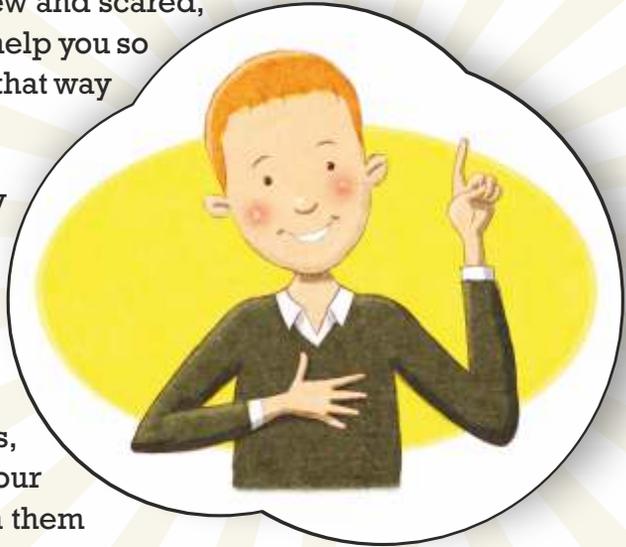
The boy from out of town leans forward. Well, this was new.

“No, here, at this school, we know how scary it can be, coming to a new place. We know how scary it can be trying to make new friends, trying to keep up with schoolwork, trying to get used to a new campus. We--” he gestures to himself and the other three students

standing next to him, “--are here to help you!”

One of the other students standing at the front of the class, a girl with waist-length brown hair steps forward. “We have lots of little things to help you out. We have our Brotherhood program, which means that any of you can come and talk to any one of us with any of your problems. Whether it's finding your way around school, trouble with classwork, or problems with your friends. We've all been where you are before. We were all new and scared, once, but now we want to help you so that you don't have to feel that way anymore.”

The shy girl suddenly raises her head and doesn't feel so conscious anymore. These people want to be our friends?



The blonde boy continues, “We've spoken to all of your teachers, and we've given them suggestions for activities you can do to help build friendships and teamwork between all of you! We're sure you can all make friends on your own, but sometimes a little push in the right direction can help. Besides, next year, we want all of you to help us continue on this work!”

*The shy girl smiled really broadly, now. That's all she's ever wanted to do--help other people feel better about themselves!*

The girl with the long brown hair starts speaking again. “And finally, we want to let all of you know that at the end of your classes for the day, you will be left out a quarter-hour early so that you can all

gather here, in this classroom, to reflect on everything you've learnt. We know that sometimes taking all of this in can be hard. We know that people will make mistakes. But that's why, at the end of the day, we should all come together to think about it and talk about it. Anyone who has any concerns should come forward during these sessions."

One student in the classroom raises his hand and says, "What sort of things will we be talking about?"

*"Well," she replies. "We want to overcome any prejudices that you may have about us, or each other. We want everyone to realise how special we all are to each other. Each person is like a gift, and we want them to know it."*

The boy with blonde hair cuts in. "We also know that the world isn't perfect. Sometimes people will fight, or be mean to each other. Sometimes we'll hurt each other. But that's why we really must

talk to each other. It inspires empathy. It allows us to understand each other and see the greatness in each other." He grins broadly. "But enough of that serious talk for today! Go, all of you, enjoy school,



have fun, make friends, fall in love. This is a glorious time for all of us!”

The students all pour out of the classroom, chattering with one another, suddenly feeling much less afraid. The boy from out of town has already met another boy who isn't from Valencia. The shy girl has met another boy who says he wants to help people, and they start talking about that as they walk through the campus. Suddenly, the long hallways are no longer scary, but full of possibility. Suddenly the noise of all the other students is a warm, comforting sound.

Suddenly, they all realise that maybe school isn't something they need to be scared about. And all thanks to the caring, thoughtful, hardworking students at Santa Teresa de Jesús - El Vedat.



# **Say Goodbye to Class Tests!**

**Tien-Hsin Elementary School, Taiwan**

Written by: Rukmini Banerjee  
Illustrations by: Chih-Ting, Hsu

Mr. Lin pulled up just around the corner from the beautiful white building with the big golden sign on its gate. In bold letters that had faded only very slightly over the years, the sign read: 'Tien-Hsin Elementary School'. As the bell marking the beginning of classes went off, the children streamed into the building – some alone, some in pairs, others in groups of five or more.

“Another beautiful day at class 502,” he mumbled to himself, as he made his way into the building and down the corridor to the Grade 5 classroom. Like every morning, he was greeted by a row of smiling faces, only too eager to find out what their class teacher had in store for them that day.

“Before we begin with today's lesson,” announced Mr. Lin, as he settled into his chair,

*“I want to ask you a very important question.” The children exchanged puzzled, nervous glances, wondering if they were in trouble.*



“I want you to think about the question and give me one unanimous answer. You can take some time to discuss it amongst yourselves. Here's the question: If I were a genie that could grant you any wish, what is the one thing you wish you could change about your school experience?”

All the kids huddled around their table to talk about what they would ask for from Teacher Lin, 'the genie'. What did they want to change about school? Their lessons? No, lessons were always fun,

especially with Teacher Lin! Recess? But they got 2 hours of recess every day – how could they possibly complain?

“Oooh, I know!” exclaimed Chiao-Yu, the studious looking girl with straight hair. “I don't like class tests!”

“Me neither!” chimed in Yu-Chen, nodding her head vigorously in agreement. “Grades scare me,” she added.



Later that afternoon, Mr. Lin related the events of the morning to his colleagues in the staffroom. “When I asked them why, they said they find it difficult to focus on the learning because they're always too busy focusing on the grades! It's not that they don't recognize the need for self-assessment – I just wish we could come up with a solution that would make the idea of testing and assessments less scary to the students.”

“Perhaps we should brainstorm together,” suggested Ms. Yu, the School Principal.

The next afternoon a meeting was convened with Mr. Lin, Ms. Yu, all the fifth grade subject teachers, the students themselves, and their parents. The agenda had been circulated before the meeting was convened, so everyone knew what was going to be discussed. The teachers expressed a desire to find out more about why the students were so averse to test-taking.

“Sometimes I am too concerned with what's important for the test, to explore anything outside that,” said Yu-Chen, glancing sideways at Teacher Lin. “I'm so worried about getting a good grade that I only concentrate on whatever we will be tested on.”

Gaining confidence from Yu-Chen's candid response, soon more students began to chime in. In the end the teachers and parents discovered that the students viewed class tests in a negative light

because they felt that grades exposed their weaknesses more than measuring their strengths. It created a sense of competition between students, and also shifted their focus from learning to performing well in an exam. Taking all this feedback into consideration, Ms. Yu decided that a new and drastic measure must be taken to change the way the students perceive tests. At the end of the open house, Ms. Yu began to ask for creative ideas for administering tests.

*Once again, the students gathered around their table and put their heads together in deep discussion.*

“Which part scares us most?” questioned Shang-Chien. “Is it the test itself or the grades?”

“It's definitely the grades,” responded Chiao-Yu. “Whenever I take a bad test, I feel ashamed to imagine what Teacher Lin must be thinking when he grades my paper. I feel embarrassed about sharing my grades with anyone in class. I don't like that feeling at all.”



Ms. Yu interrupted their discussion. “Let me help you a little. First, think about how you can redefine what tests mean to you. What could you change about class tests which would make you fear them less?”

Suddenly, Yun-Hsi's face lit up. “What if we grade our own tests!” she suggested, excitedly.

“That’s a great idea, Yun-Hsi!” exclaimed Yu-Chen. “That way we ourselves can measure how much or how little we have learned in class.”

The students started getting visibly excited. They began to build off each other’s ideas. Yu-Chen suggested that they devise a Self-Assessment Sheet, which they could use to measure their individual levels of learning. Both Teacher Lin and Ms. Yu approved of the idea of having Self-Assessment sheets instead of class tests as a way to mitigate this fear of exams that was so deeply entrenched in the students’ minds.

Needless to say, not all parents were happy. “Is this a joke?” enquired Mr. Kung, with much concern in his voice. “Now Shang-Chien will grade his own papers? What is the point of that? How will the kids ever know where they stand?”

Mrs. Kung did not seem very pleased either. “These are children, we’re talking about. How can we trust them to assess themselves?”

Mr. Lin and Ms. Yu assured that the Self-Assessment Sheets would not be nearly as unstructured as the parents thought it would. “We will work with the students to develop short-term goals and indicators of success,” said Mr. Lin. Some of the parents still looked unconvinced. “They will then use these indicators to assess how they have fared in each subject.”

The parents had many questions and concerns, but little did they know how persistent their children could be. They were determined to shape their own learning experience, and were both surprised and delighted to receive so much support from their Principal and teachers!

And so it was decided. In May, the exams of class 502 would be replaced by the new Self-Assessment sheets developed by the teachers and students collaboratively. The 502ers were doubly excited – not only because they had worked together to bring about this drastic change in their school testing system, but also

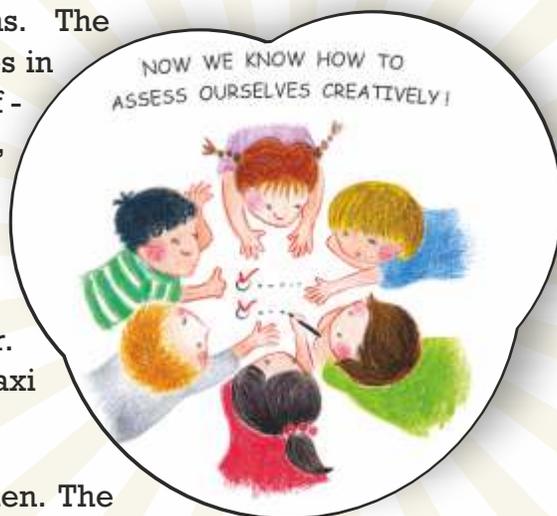
because Teacher Lin had just announced that they will be touring around Daxi Old Street for a day of fun, while other students are taking exams in school!

Soon the first round of self-assessment was carried out, with little to no glitches. Principal Yu and Mr. Lin both realized that this procedure was a little more time-consuming than class tests. However, everyone else was envious of the 'lucky 502ers,' and they were asked lots of questions. The 502ers shared their struggles in completing the self-assessment along the way, and of course, their happiness too!

“So? What do you think of the entire process?” asked Mr. Lin, after the day of fun in Daxi Old Street.

“I loved it!” shouted Yu-Chen. The other kids joined in, and soon everyone began excitedly discussing this wonderful new method of 'testing' that they had devised.

“I don't have to worry about grades anymore!” declared Yun-Hsi. I can finally concentrate on my lessons rather than on my grades!” A bunch of happy, chattering 502ers went home to their parents that afternoon. For the first time in their lives, they felt like little superheroes – confronting, taking action, and overcoming the one thing that had scared them all!

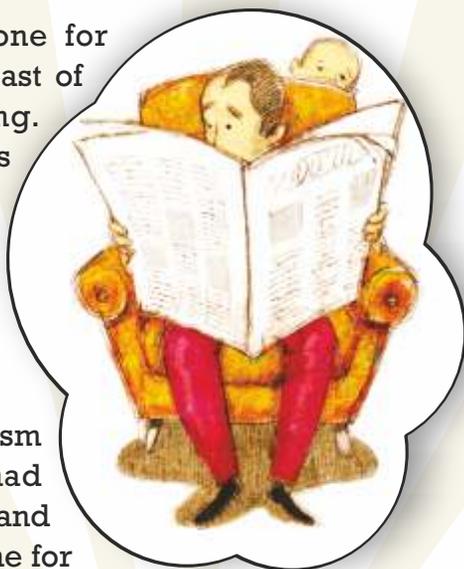


# **Sweeter than Icing Sugar**

**Gymnasium # 7, Ukraine**

Written by: Sahana Srinivasan  
Illustrations by: René Moya

This past year has been a hard one for Ukraine, and information from the east of the country was rarely heartening. Children would often see their parents read the morning newspaper with concerned faces. With 3000 fellow countrymen dead or missing in action, the tension in the air was palpable.



Even so, undercurrents of enthusiasm shone through. The long winter had finally passed, and the warm sun and clear sky meant that it was almost time for Easter, a time for delicious home-made cakes and melty chocolate eggs!

*The children at Gymnasium #7 could hardly wait for the festival, which they celebrated with an Easter Fair on the school grounds.*

Two weeks before the big event, students from the different forms gathered together in the main hall to discuss and plan things in detail. The students were bursting with ideas, and a voice piped up



– “I wonder what the soldiers are doing for Easter!” The chatter rose again. “Maybe we should do something for them, after all, they are doing so much for us.” The little children in the front of the room suggested that they send cakes. “When I am

feeling sad or worried, my mother bakes me a little cake, and it makes me feel so happy!” The older students were very amused, and asked, “But why does it make you happy?”, to which the little one replied, “It reminds me that no matter what happens, my mother still thinks I deserve cake, and of course, sweets are YUMMY!”

As the laughter subsided, the students realized that this was, in fact, a lovely idea. A little comfort and cheer in the form of confectionery could go a long way in making those in the war-affected areas forget their strife for just a little while and enjoy Easter. All the students quickly became interested in this, and volunteered to work towards baking Easter cakes that could be sent to different parts of Ukraine.

The next few days passed by in a blur of activity. Students from Form 10 took charge of the activities –



*the girls brought ingredients from home and baked 100 cakes and 100 Easter eggs in the school eatery, which were sent to a hospital treating soldiers injured at war.*

Others made presents for the wounded soldiers, and another 720 cakes were prepared and sent to Lugansk and Donetsk. Not just this, they managed to raise 25000 hryvnya, which contributed towards the treatment of two children with cancer.

There are a lot of things that we often take for granted, like the safety of our own homes and the love of our family and friends. Festivals like Easter give us the opportunity to take a step away from our daily routine to realize how blessed we are, and to be grateful for all that we have. This year, it was this spirit of togetherness that the students of Gymnasium #7 celebrated.

*Their selfless and caring action undoubtedly brought a smile to many faces that had not had a reason to smile in a long time.*



No matter how terrible the circumstances, a single good deed can turn someone's life around. This compassion makes these students true role models, who embody the spirit of kindness and truly understand how one small act of kindness can effect powerful change.

The logo for 'Radio Liceo' is a white, stylized cloud shape with a black outline. Inside the cloud, the words 'Radio Liceo' are written in a bold, black, sans-serif font. The background of the entire page consists of diagonal stripes in various shades of blue, grey, and orange.

# **Radio Liceo**

**Liceo N° 1de Carmelo- "Dr. David Bonjour", Uruguay**

Written by: Sahana Srinivasan  
Illustrations by: René Moya

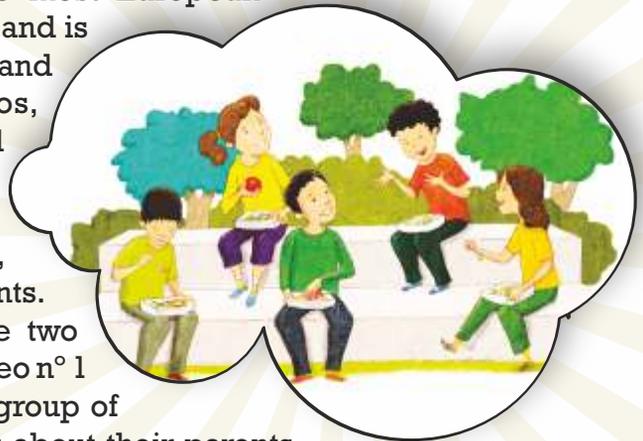
“The Parent-Teacher meetings are tonight,” said Gervasio. “I hope my teachers say good things about me.”

“My Mum doesn't want to go,” replied Milagros. “She doesn't know what she and the teachers will talk about.”

The rest of the group nodded in agreement.

*“My parents feel the same. They say they don't know what happens in school, and what kind of work we do,” added Facundo.*

Uruguay, located in South America, borders the Southern Atlantic Ocean. People call it the most European country in South America, and is known for its many cows and sheep. Gervasio, Milagros, Facundo, Naharia and Ezquiél lived in Carmelo, a small city on the South-Western coast of Uruguay, with about 20,000 inhabitants. They attended one of the two high schools in the city; Liceo n° 1 “Dr. David Bonjour”. The group of five shared their concerns about their parents not knowing much about their school.



“Our parents haven't attended schools like ours,” continued Ezquiél. “It would be good to keep them updated on the various activities and projects happening in school.”

“I'm sure they would be impressed,” said Naharia. Milagros pulled them back a step. “Let's not get ahead of ourselves. We'll meet tomorrow after the Parent-Teacher meetings and see what our parents say about the meeting.”

As the lunch bell rang across the school the next day, the group of five bought lunch and sat together at a quiet spot.

Naharia started the discussion. “My mum and dad were so surprised! They didn't know much about school. They especially liked the science experiment we conducted on different types of bacteria.”

“My parents are very interested now,” said Gervasio. “They especially liked the Math project we did about bivariate data. They said it is a very different approach to teaching, and it was never like that in their schools.”

“My parents said we are very lucky to attend our school. Now they all want to know more about what we do!” said Facundo.

The group of five approached one of their teachers and voiced their concerns about how their parents didn't know much about their school work.

“Mr. Llaguno!” called Ezquiél.

They quickly explained their problem to him, and Mr. Llaguno seemed to see their point.

“I have my own children and I used to face the same issue as your parents,” said Mr Llaguno. “The simple solution would be to spend five minutes each day at the dinner table talking with your parents about what you do in school. This is my suggestion, but I am confident that the five of you can together come up with a more effective solution to this problem.”

They thanked Mr Llaguno and walked away, gears turning in all five minds. The five of them agreed to start with Mr Llaguno's solution for today, and see how it worked. They would think of a better solution starting from tomorrow.

The next day, the group of five met up again at lunch.

“My parents really enjoyed it. It was the first time they had gotten a full account on our school work,” said Gervasio.

The rest agreed, and shared similar experiences.

“But we still need to think of a more efficient and engaging way to showcase the variety of projects and activities we do in school,” pointed Naharia, as the rest of the group nodded.

Facundo sounded excited. “We could use technology! These days, more and more people are getting information from the internet, using computers, mobile phones, tablets...”

Milagros cut him off. “We can't get carried away. Facundo, just because you like technology doesn't mean everybody enjoys using it. What we need to do is ask people what kind of sources they use for information. We can then create a source more people will use.”



Over the next few days, the group of five spread out around school and started asking people what kind of sources they used daily. On the fourth day, the group met up at lunch to share their results. After counting all the preferences, they evaluated the most popular sources.

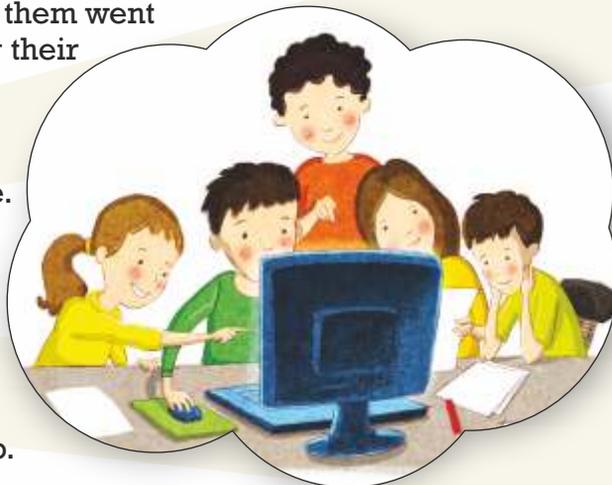
Ezquiél relayed the final information to the group. “The most popular sources for information among students are YouTube, websites, blogs and Facebook.”

*“It will be easy to create a Facebook page to communicate information, but we have to make sure we regularly update and post on the page,” warned Naharia.*

“I can check if we can use the school website! There is a news page on the website we can use,” added Facundo, excited about all things technology.

That night, the group of five stayed up late working on their new Facebook page. Facundo had created a banner using digital illustrations, and their page was soon looking quite professional. They started off with a few introductory posts and one post about their latest project in school.

Then next day, the five of them went around school promoting their new Facebook page, and Facundo placed a notice on the school website about the Facebook page. By the end of the next day, the page had over 200 likes.



At lunch, Milagros shared his latest brainwave with the group.

“What if we shared our activities and projects with the whole community of Carmelo, instead of just limiting it to students and parents?”

The rest of the group liked the idea, but they decided to ask the members of the Carmelo community if they would like it or not. They took the same survey they gave to the students to give to the members of public as well. The group spent hours on multiple weekends going to shopping malls, elderly homes, community centres and public areas to gather information.

After five days of asking and surveying, they were exhausted but motivated.

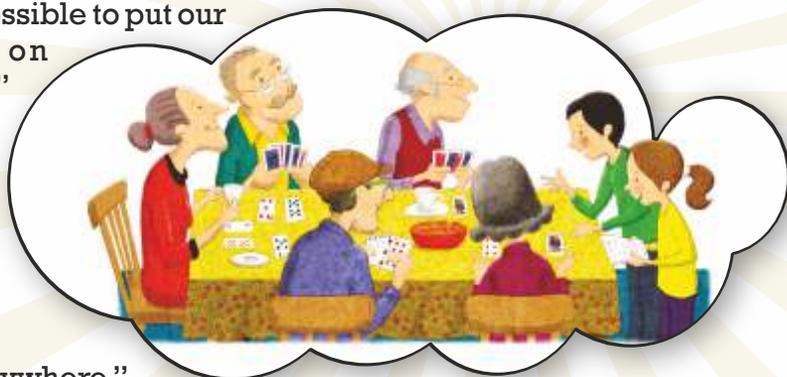
“They all seemed to like the idea. I think we should go ahead with this idea,” voiced Ezquiél.

“The elderly warmed up to the idea the most. A lot of them seem bored, and they are also curious to see the schools today compared to the schools of their time,” relayed Gervasio.

But Naharia was sceptical. “I surveyed 3 elderly homes, and they all

said they didn't use much technology. Their main sources of information were from the local newspaper, and the local radio. It would be impossible to put our information on these sources!"

"Why? If we put our minds to it and worked together, we could get our information anywhere," said Milagros, not fond of Naharia's demoralisation.



The rest of the team were getting excited.

"Can we really do that?" asked Facundo. "I'd love to go into a radio station, you know. With the hi-tech Rhode microphones with XLR, and sound equipment, the rows of—"

Milagros cut Facundo off once again. "Facundo, enough with the technology talk. It's not like any of us can understand you anyway. Let's meet up tomorrow to discuss getting on to the radio and newspaper.

The next day, the group started to brainstorm ideas. Spreading the information to the wider public was a definite choice, but now they had to work on talking to the local newspaper and the local radio station. They spend hours scripting proposals and went down to each office together to voice their ideas in fancy presentations created by Facundo, the tech guru. Now all they could do was wait for their yes or no.

Gervasio, Milagros, Ezquiél, Naharia, and Facundo were ecstatic. Within two days, both the newspaper and radio station had replied and both loved their idea.

Today, they have their very own Radio programme on the local radio, a column in the local weekly newspaper, and a regularly updated YouTube channel and Facebook page. The group also posts this information on their school website.



# **Committed to Change**

**Winthrop Elementary School, USA**

Written by: Katherine Holland  
Illustrations by: Souradeep Ghosh

Piles of paper, markers, and colored pencils greeted students as they filed into enrichment on Monday afternoon. "I thought Mondays were for ELA?" asked one student. Students at the Winthrop Elementary were used to routines during afterschool. Seeing art supplies stacked on their desks was unexpected and students eagerly waited to hear about what they would be doing.

*With great pride, their Corps Member announced that this ELA lesson would be a bit different from the rest. As she read from Dr. Seuss' The Lorax, students were encouraged to draw their own images from the story.*

Colorful pictures of trees began to fill up students' desks. When asked about the themes of the story, students were quick to pick up on the environmental issues that arose as a result of cutting down trees. What a fun story, but what a horrible thing to do! Why would anyone cut down all of the trees in a forest? The Winthrop students were saddened by the antagonist's actions. Under the guidance of their Corps Members, they considered the theme of the story. Unless someone cares enough to stand up and make changes, situations will not improve. But what situations at the Winthrop could students stand up for?



The class thought about their school and community. Why was there so much trash in the hallways? Why didn't any of the paper they used get recycled? Why were the windows left open when the heat was turned on? And why did so much food get thrown away each day? What a waste of energy, food, and resources!

In teams, students graphed the waste in each area of the school. "We think we'll see the most waste in the cafeteria. Kids throw away so much food everyday" said a few students. "We think there is too much paper and trash in the hallways. Why don't we have recycling bins?" asked a few others. As they compared graphs, they realized most of the waste in the school was paper. If they implemented a recycling program, paper would no longer be thrown into the trash and wouldn't litter the hallways. "Paper being thrown into the trash is an issue that affects everyone in the school. Let's focus on that," said another student. This would have the biggest impact on the school community.



Since their project focused so much on paper and waste, students learned about recycling and composting to find a solution that worked best for them. "Why would we want to compost the majority of our waste instead of recycling it?" asked one Corps Member.

*"Recycling uses energy, but with composting, the worms do all of the work!"*

the Corps Member answered. This new knowledge led students to want to recycle some of the materials themselves. "Let's make soccer balls" yelled some. "We're going to make a robot!" others chimed in. Seeing how fun recycling could be, students decided to start a recycling program for the school.

But what would it take to create a recycling program from scratch? The Winthrop afterschool program would need to purchase recycling bins, label them, and teach everyone in the school how to use them.



Once the bins are in each classroom, who will be responsible for emptying them? And how often? The students considered many options. Each classroom could be responsible for its own bin or a small group of students could manage the bins for the entire school. Teachers could make announcements about the new program or afterschool students could take responsibility for teaching the school. There was so much to think about!

Ultimately, the Winthrop students decided they would be responsible for sharing all of the knowledge they had acquired

about recycling with the rest of the school. "Let's go from classroom to classroom to explain why we should recycle and how to use the new recycling bins!" exclaimed one student. The rest of the afterschool program couldn't agree more, so they began writing speeches about the importance of recycling, created and hung up signs to encourage recycling, and brought a new recycling bin to each classroom. If they wanted everyone in the school to start recycling, they would have to make it as easy as possible. "We should empty the recycling bins ourselves, but maybe not every day," suggested one student. The students in afterschool decided that they would empty the recycling bins once per week.

The school community was thrilled to see that a recycling project had started and was very supportive of the students' efforts. Bins got so full that they needed to be emptied multiple times each week! With this success, the Winthrop students decided to continue tackling environmental issues in their community. Next on their list, the school playground and park!

With trash bags, gloves and other tools, students set out to clean up the areas surrounding their school. While trash was easy to clean up, other items, like broken glass, were not safe for the students to touch. Disappointed that they were unable to carry out their project and make the park a clean and safe space for community members to utilize, they decided to write to the Mayor to ask for help.



*"Let's write about the dangerous glass we saw," said one student.*

Additionally, students felt that it was important to explain to the Mayor why they needed help to clean the park. By sharing their concern about the state of the park, students were hopeful that more community members would get involved and help make a difference.

*“The park should be a place where everyone can come and play,” said the students.*

While students at the Winthrop await the Mayor's response, the recycling program continues to be successful. Now when paper can be seen in the hallways, it means the recycling bin is overflowing, not the garbage can, and that's a good thing. Together, the elaborately decorated classroom recycling bins and bright blue recycling bins outside remind students of their hard work and the change they have brought to the Winthrop Elementary School Community.



# I CAN

## SCHOOL CHALLENGE

Your students **CAN BE THE CHANGE!**

Show them how the simple Design Thinking Framework of **FEEL-IMAGINE-DO-SHARE** can help them **CHANGE** their world

Submit your story of change on [challenge.dfcworld.com](http://challenge.dfcworld.com)



### STEP 1

## FEEL

### THINK FROM YOUR HEART

The first step towards making change happen is to try to understand how people feel.

#### 1.OBSERVE

Look at your surroundings closely. Your class, your school and community. observe the people and their lives. The physical infrastructure and spaces. Social traditions and culture.

- What bothers you?
- What would you like to see changed?

#### 2.VOTE

- Share your observations with the team
- vote for the one situation that you would all like to see changed

#### 3.ENGAGE

Go out and talk to people who are involved and affected by the situation.

- Interview them to understand their concerns. This step will help you identify the various parts of the situation that can be improved.



### STEP 2

## IMAGINE

### VISUALIZE SUCCESS

A situation is a sum total of its different parts. each part might need a different solution to change the situation for the better.

#### 1.BRAINSTORMING TOOLS

explore ideas for creating the quickest impact, affecting the maximum number of people and making long-lasting change.

encourage a variety of ideas – don't shy away from the wild ones.

- Build on the ideas of others – use the word 'and' instead of 'but'.
- Illustrate your ideas for better clarity.

#### 2.VOTE

Vote for the ideas that best address each part of the situation to 'design for change'.



#### THINGS TO REMEMBER

Try to think beyond the first or 'obvious' solution and collect as many ideas from as many people as possible.

### GETTING STARTED

Introduce your students to the idea that changing lives can be meaningful and fun.

A winning story in comic book format is included for your reference. Read it with your students to start a discussion on enabling change. You can show them more of our winning stories [at stories.dfcworld.com](http://stories.dfcworld.com)

### ELIGIBILITY FOR PARTICIPATION

The DFC I CAN School Challenge is open to all school students. The ideal age group is 8 -13 years.

The participation is absolutely free. No fee involved.

### JURY PROCESS

The DFC judges look for stories led by children, where they choose to tackle challenges that directly bother them.

The judges also look for evidence of children engaging with their community to understand needs and perspectives while dealing with the challenge at hand.

Higher points are allotted for generating a large variety of ideas, and selecting those that directly fulfill the needs of the people the children are designing a solution for.

Help your students think beyond obvious answers like raising money or conducting a rally.

# ARE YOU READY TO BE A SUPERHERO?

MAKE SUPER SQUADS OF 5 TEAM MEMBERS. NOW FOLLOW THESE 4 STEPS TO GET YOUR

# I CAN SUPERPOWER



## MAKE CHANGE HAPPEN

### 1. PLAN

- What resources will be required? What is the budget? How will you get the money? How many people will be required? How much time will it take?
- How will you document your work?
- Divide the work amongst yourself.

### THINGS TO REMEMBER

Try and reach out to organizations or professionals working in your area of concern. Ask your teachers for help in contacting them and partnering with them.

### 2. IMPLEMENT

- Go out and put your plan in to action.  
Yes, You CAN!

### 3. REFLECT

- What 3 things did you learn about the situation?
- What 2 things did you learn about your team-mates?
- What 1 thing did you learn about yourself?
- How do you plan to sustain the impact of your project?



## "I CAN! NOW YOU CAN TOO!"

Sharing your story with the world will help many others say, "I CAN!"

### 1. SUBMIT

Share your story with us at [www.challenge.dfcworld.com](http://www.challenge.dfcworld.com)  
Please follow the submission guidelines given on the site.

You may include:

- Photos and Text documents (max 4 photos for each step)
- video/YouTube link (max 3 min long)

**If you don't have internet access, send in your submission form to us by post.**

### 2. INSPIRE

You could use these ideas to expand your circle of influence

- Share your story at your morning assembly
- organize a parent meeting
- Spread awareness through a newsletter
- Share your story via local media/TV



### THINGS TO REMEMBER

Focus on showing other people how easy, fun and meaningful it is to 'be the change.'

## WRAPPING UP

It is important for the children to go out and collect statistics and feedback from the community once their act of change has been completed.

To complete the process, children must reflect on their experience and map the shift in their attitude by talking, drawing and writing about it.

**SUBMIT YOUR STORY ON  
[CHALLENGE.DFCWORLD.COM](http://CHALLENGE.DFCWORLD.COM)**

**DFC strongly recommends  
submitting your story online**

**In case you wish to submit  
your story through post,  
please fill in the enclosed  
submission form and send  
it to us via post.**

# *Scribble Pad*

# Scribble Pad

All children grow up listening to tales of great valour and courage shown by **superheroes** with **magical powers**. Children listen with wonder and are amazed at how these heroes save the world. And just as they start idealising and believing in this, we adults tell them that superheroes exist only in fairy tales.

Today, **Design for Change** has unleashed a new generation of superheroes. These superheroes are making the world around them a better place. Their power is their belief in their own selves to lead change. The two powerful words, **'I CAN'** is their **superpower**.

Be inspired by twenty-two stories of change from children around the world. Lend your ears to their stories of care and determination. Celebrate the tales of the real superheroes. Learn that if you try hard enough, you will most certainly overcome adversity. Come, **be the change**. For all you know, your story maybe in these pages next year.

