

Stories From

# GIRLS

Who  
To

# DARED DREAM

Tales from around the world  
of girls who never gave up

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*Stories From*  
**GIRLS**  
*Who* **DARED**  
*To* **DREAM**

Tales from around the world  
of the girls who never gave up



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# Introduction

Right now, a girl is dreaming up a video game that's fun to play but also teaches kids about protecting the environment. A boy is sketching designs for a new robot he'd love to invent.

A teen is working out how to start an art club to help kids become award-winning artists. A girl is writing a book about all the ways you can help other people without really trying.

Right now, kids all over the world are dreaming.


They're staring out their windows into the world – curtains open so nothing can block their view – thinking about how to put their wildest dreams, their next moves, their big ideas into action.

In some parts of the world, it's harder for girls and boys to do everyday things that most of us take for granted: to have the chance to be born, survive childhood, go to school, choose a job, or just choose their path at all.

That's because they were born into families and communities struggling to provide the basic things people need to survive, such as food, a safe home, clean drinking water, and medicine when they get sick, or personal items to keep them healthy like a toothbrush and soap.

And sometimes, their communities' beliefs about what kids can and can't do, especially girls, are holding them back.

But, even with these challenges, kids can still dream big dreams.



Kids can still have big, mind-blowing, life-altering ideas. Or little world-changing ones, too. And make them happen.

In the 100 countries where World Vision works, we have front-row tickets to the challenges that kids growing up in tough places face. But also to the amazing dreams kids have and how they are standing up, speaking up, and taking action to create the world they want to live in.

They're part of a transformation that's happening for girls and boys around the world. It's happening bit by bit – one idea, one conversation, one law, one small business, one life at a time – in homes and communities worldwide.

It's incredible and exciting – and it's a change we can all be part of! That's why we wrote this book.

These are the stories of 10 girls who were curious, determined, creative, and brave. They believed they could change their worlds and they didn't give up until they did.

They are today's change-makers, writing their own stories in small ways and big ways (and small ways that turn into big ways). Together, these girls and millions more like them, are revolutionising the world.

Right now, there is a girl or boy holding this book, who is shaping the future, too. It will be all we decide to make it. Let's go.



# ANITA

## THE FRUIT WARRIOR



**In Kenya, where Anita lives,  
lots of people eat corn for  
breakfast, lunch, and dinner.**

But a few times a year, the clouds disappear. The skies lock shut. There is no rain and that means no corn. Anita's tummy rumbled when she had to go to bed hungry.


Anita was fed up! She dreamed that her belly was full and her cupboards were stocked with food.

How could her family grow enough food to eat when the rain disappeared?

The cogs inside her brain  
**whirled** and **whooshed**...  
**Anita had an idea.**







Straight after school, Anita raced to the fields where her parents were hard at work.

**“Why don’t we grow something else? Something other than corn?”**

Her friends at World Vision had been teaching people in Anita’s village new ways to grow food.

Anita found out about all the not-corn foods that can grow from a few tiny seeds! Some can grow even when there isn’t much water.

She learned how burying dry leaves into the soil can give plants more water to drink when the dry season arrives. So cool!

She discovered you can even use animal poo as plant food to help plants grow. Who knew poo could be so useful?



But not everyone wanted to listen  
to a 9-year-old.

*“They don’t know what they’re talking about.”*

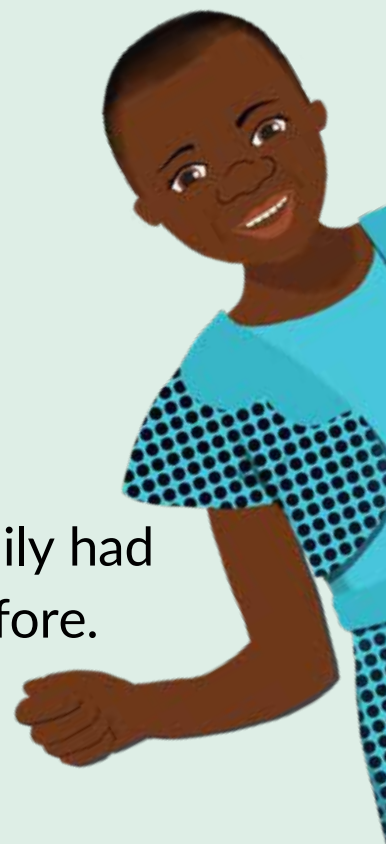
*“They haven’t lived long enough to have clever  
ideas like adults.”*

Or have they?

Anita believed in her **big idea**.

She wouldn’t give up, even though her family had  
never planted anything other than corn before.

Finally, she convinced her parents to try it!





Today, Anita is 11 years old.

Her garden is full of...

**sweet potatoes,**

**bananas,**


**apples,**

**sugarcane,**

**and mangoes.**



Her belly is full, even when there's no rain! Because she didn't give up on her big idea, no matter what other people said.



“Even if our corn doesn’t grow well, we don’t go to sleep hungry,” she says proudly. “My parents can still earn money by selling our other crops.”

Anita loves to teach kids in her village all the things she has learned about growing food.

**“Even though we’re young,  
we can still make a difference.  
We can make our lives better,  
and help our families and  
community!”**

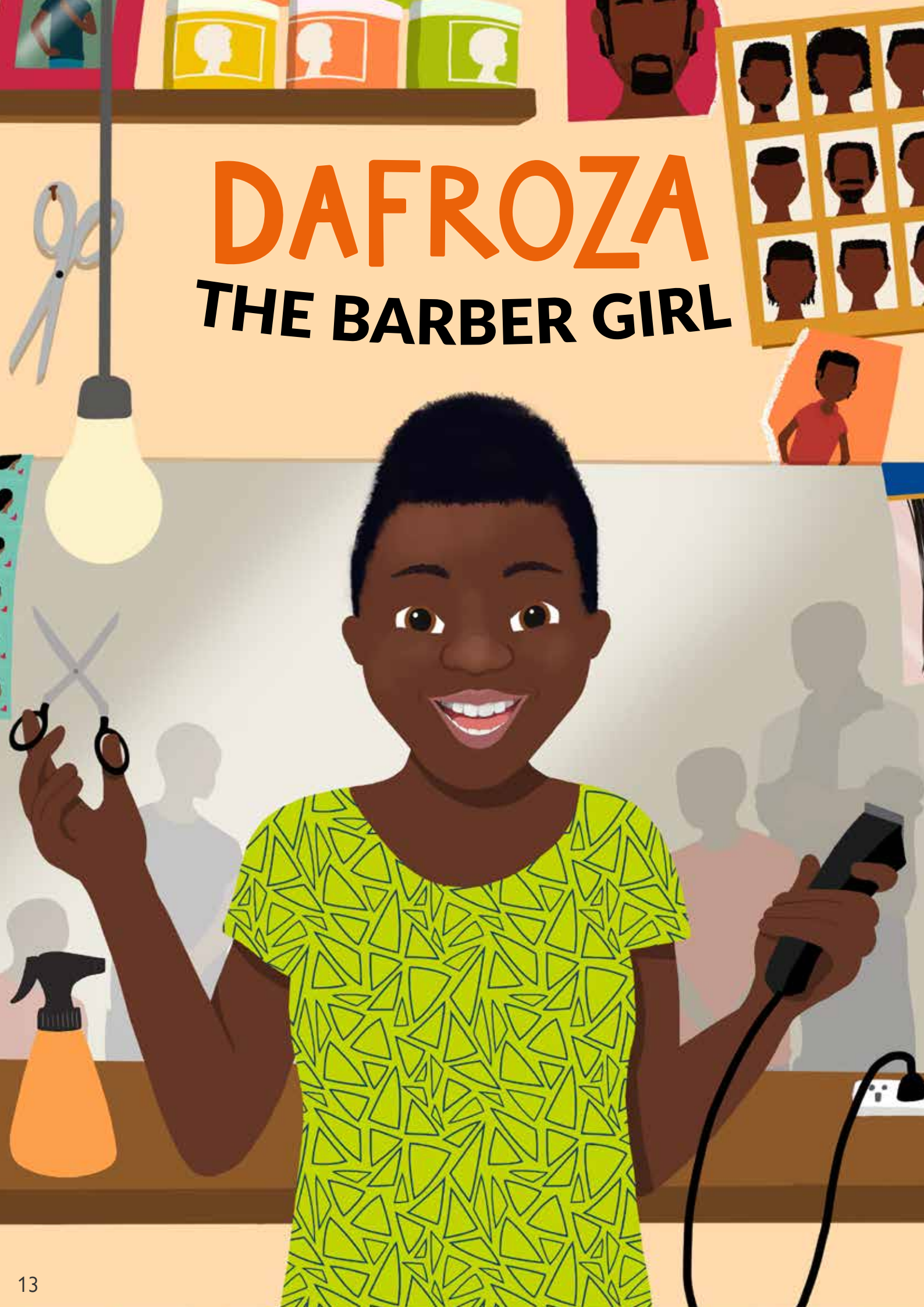


**What about you?** If you could change one thing your family does, what would it be?



# DAFROZA

## THE BARBER GIRL







Soon, Dafroza had her brothers' hair looking better than ever. Word quickly spread around the village that it was Dafroza who kept her brothers looking so sharp.



Neighbours began bringing their boys to Dafroza for a **clip, crop,** and **cut.**

Dafroza knew she could be a really good barber if she had the chance.

But in her village, that was a job for men – *only* men.



Her friends at World Vision thought differently.  
They believed in her dream.

**“You can do anything you want to,  
if you work hard to achieve it,”** they told her.

“Dad,” Dafroza said,  
“I want to work at the barbershop.”

“A barber?!” said her dad. “That sounds  
crazy! Girls can’t be barbers.”

So, he took Dafroza to the  
ladies’ hair salon instead.  
But Dafroza didn’t like the  
smell of the hairspray.  
She missed the shaver.

“Dad,” she said, “I don’t want  
to work at the hair salon.  
I want to be a barber girl.”



Dafroza's dad harumphed. He worried. Then he sighed.

**“My daughter wants to be the first barber girl in Mvugwe,”**

he told the barber.

**“Girls can't be barbers!”**

said some of the men waiting for a trim.

**“Girls can't be barbers!”**

added one of the wives looking on.

*I'll show them,* Dafroza thought.

**Buzzzz** went Dafroza's shaver.

**Snip-snap** went her scissors.



**“She handles the shaving machine well,”**

said the barber,  
watching Dafroza work.

**“We've never had a barber girl before, but now, here we are.”**



Today, customers come from all over the region to have Dafroza cut their hair. She is working hard to learn all she can, so one day she can open her own barbershop and hire barber girls.

The barber is proud of her. And so are her parents and her nine brothers and sisters.

**“People told me I was crazy, letting Dafroza work at a barbershop,” says her dad. “I say to them, look at her now. She’s doing what she believes in.”**

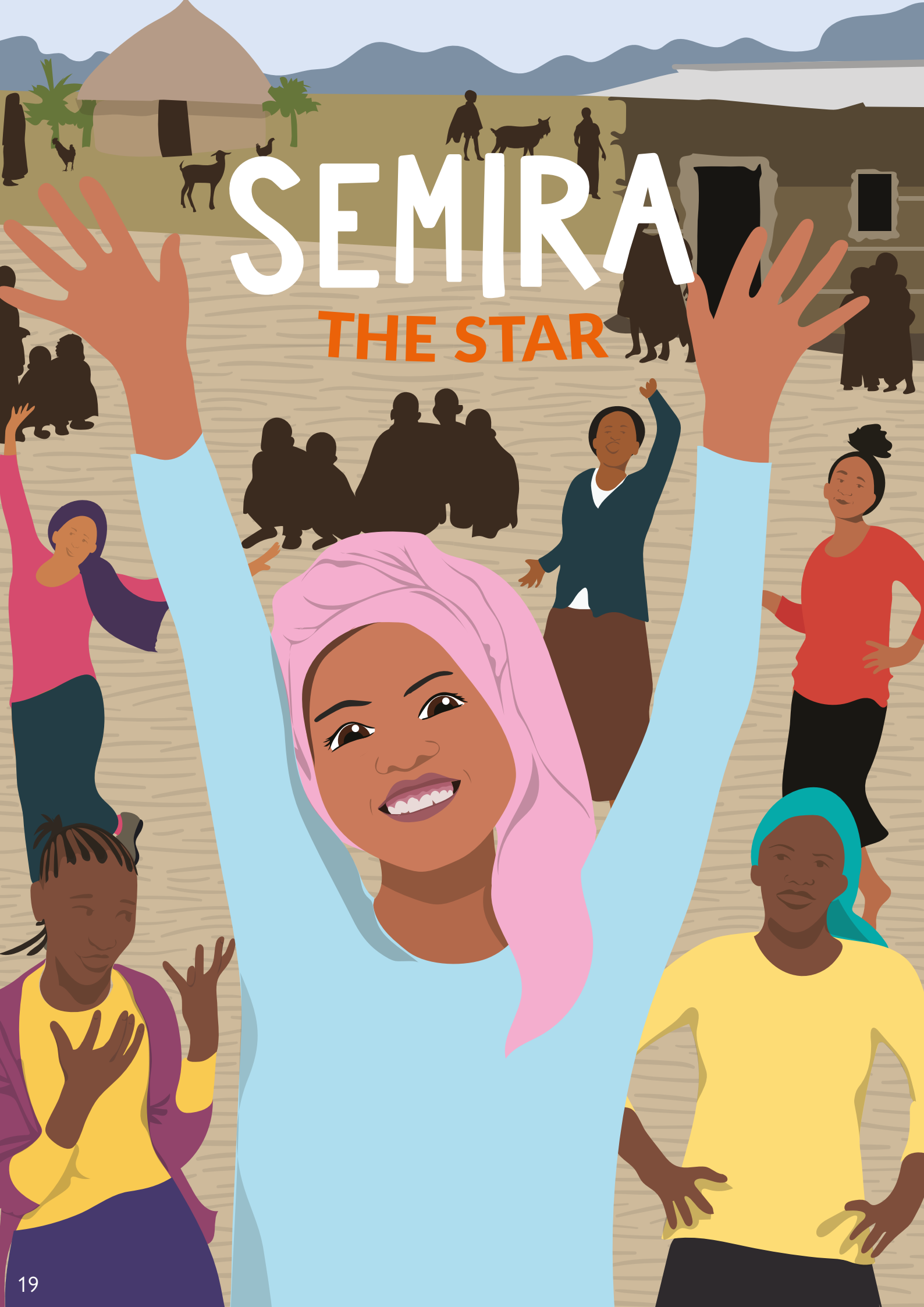


**What about you?** Have you ever been the first person to do something in your family or community?



# SEMIRA

## THE STAR



**Every morning, Semira fetched the water. Then she collected the firewood. And then she cooked the food.**

The whole time, her three brothers would play with their friends or relax under a tree.

In her village in Ethiopia, girls did all the chores. Boys didn't. But no one thought there was anything strange about that.

**It was just how things were.**

Doing all the chores made it hard for girls to get to school on time, or get there at all.

It was hard for Semira to keep up.



Semira guessed it didn't matter.  
Girls in her village were often married  
before they finished school, anyway.

Many girls didn't decide who they married,  
or if they wanted to get married so young.

It was just how things were in her village.



## **That was until Semira turned 13, and everything changed.**

World Vision friends were working in her community.  
They explained to boys and girls, including Semira, and  
their teachers and school principals, that **things could  
be different.**

They explained that the laws in Ethiopia said girls  
should be able to go to school, choose whether to get  
married or not when they grew up, and decide what  
they wanted to be.



Semira learned that some of the traditions in her village were dangerous for girls and that girls, *not just boys*, should be able to **play** and **study** and **dream** of doing amazing things, too.

**“I’m going to make sure everyone knows what girls can do!”** Semira said.

And that’s when she had her **BIG idea**. Semira and her friends wasted no time – they set up a girls’ club.

When they met up, they wrote plays and poems and songs. They practised until they got them just right. Then they started performing them for kids and adults all over their village. People **LOVED** them!

Semira’s songs and plays weren’t just fun to watch. They had a **secret weapon** – they were full of important messages.

People watching would think not just about **how things were**, but how they **should be**.

Their plays and poems and songs talked about the rights of boys and girls to feel safe, make their own choices, and have a bright future.



Now, Semira's group performs at her school every week, as well as lots of other schools.

## **She's the star of the show!**

Semira and her friends don't just sing and dance about changing things – they make it happen, too.

And lots of kids are joining them.

Children are listening out, and when they hear that a girl might be told to marry young or won't be allowed to attend school, they run to tell Semira's group.

Then Semira's group gets the school principal or the police to help out.

**Together,  
the kids are  
keeping each  
other safe  
and free!**





Today, Semira is 15 years old, and she knows the world is what you make it.

She has a new dream and she's working out how to make it happen.

**“I want every girl to have the chance to finish school,” she says. “And to see girls be leaders!”**



**What about you?** Would you like to be the star of a show? What sort of show?

# JHESIE

## THE BUSINESSWOMAN



**Before the sun rises, when most kids are fast asleep, 10-year-old Jhesie is already dressed and running out the door to her uncle's house.**

She can smell  
his house  
before she  
sees it!

That's because  
hundreds of bread  
buns are baking in  
the oven, waiting  
for her to arrive.

People in Jhesie's  
village in the  
Philippines **love**  
to eat them for  
breakfast with  
hot coffee.



These buns are called **pandesal**.

**“YUM! They smell delicious!”** she shouts.

But Jhesie’s not at her uncle’s house to eat. She’s there to work! She stacks piles of the warm buns into boxes, ready to sell.

**“Pandesa!”** she calls, as she walks through her neighbourhood. “Warm and tasty, straight from the oven! Get your **hot pandesa!**”



Jhesie is a master businesswoman. She tracks what she’s sold in a notebook and stores her earnings in a special bag. She’s a whizz at adding up her sales on the run!

It’s not always easy getting up before dark and being a businesswoman before school every day.

But through those **little buns**, Jhesie has discovered a **big secret**.

Do you know what it is?

## **Saving a little bit of money every day can add up to something big!**

Jhesie learned the secret from her World Vision friends. They showed her and the other kids how to set up a group to learn about saving money.

First, Jhesie saved a bit of the money her parents had given her to buy lunch. (Don't worry, she kept enough for lunch!)

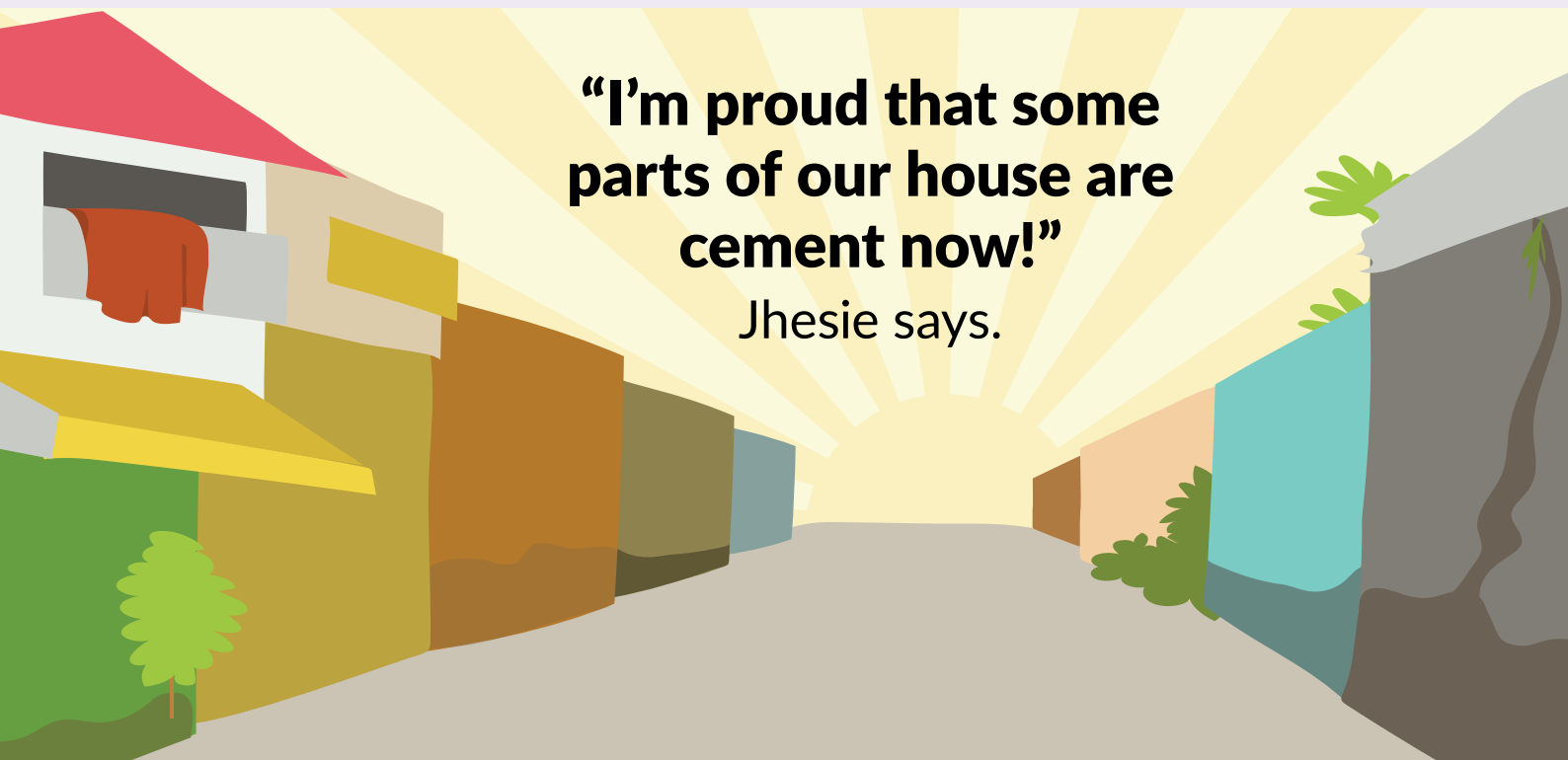
Every week, she and her friends would put the money they'd saved in a locked box for safe keeping.





At the end of the year, Jhesie counted her cash. There was a huge pile of coins – enough to buy **some new clothes** and help her parents **fix part of their house**.

Her family’s home was made mostly of bamboo, which meant the wind and rain could get in.



**“I’m proud that some parts of our house are cement now!”**

Jhesie says.

Jhesie wanted to save more money. So, she asked her uncle if she could help him with the morning sales of pandesal buns.

After one year of selling pandesal buns and saving her money, Jhesie bought her family a **mobile phone!**

Not only could they **stay in touch**, but she also used it to **learn online** when her school was closed.

Now, Jhesie has a **really big goal**. She wants to open her own restaurant.

“I’ll decorate the walls with stickers and cut-out drawings of flowers, clouds, and birds to make it beautiful,” she says.

**“I’ll always buy chocolate ice cream for my brothers and sisters and parents. And I’ll save so much that we’ll be able to buy everything we need.”**

Some kids dream of being entrepreneurs when they grow up, but Jhesie doesn’t need to dream – even though she’s young, she already is one!



**What about you?** What’s the best thing you could save your money for?

# SUDHA

## THE IDEAS GIRL



**Sudha looked out the window and sighed. Other kids ran past, flying kites and laughing.**

**“Girls should stay at home and help their mothers,”** her dad said.

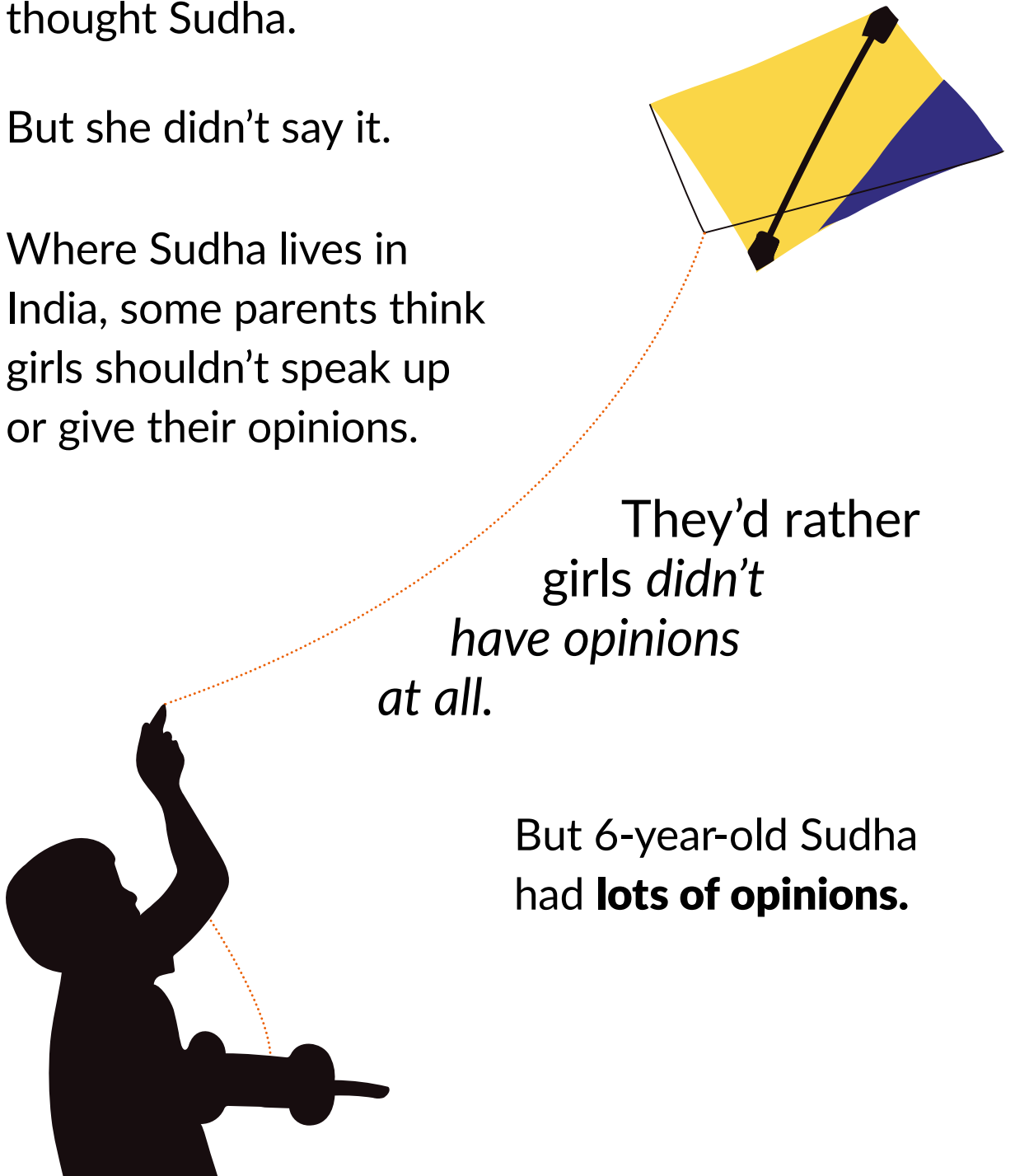
*Staying at home all the time is BORING!*  
thought Sudha.

But she didn't say it.

Where Sudha lives in India, some parents think girls shouldn't speak up or give their opinions.

They'd rather  
girls *didn't*  
*have opinions*  
*at all.*

But 6-year-old Sudha had **lots of opinions.**





## **Sudha couldn't wait to start school!**


But she didn't know if she'd be allowed to go, because not all girls went to school in her village.

Going to school was expensive.

Her parents didn't have much money, and she was one of three kids.

Lots of people she knew said going to school and learning to think or explore big ideas *was for boys*.

And cleaning up, cooking and caring for babies *was for girls*.

An illustration of a young girl with dark hair in a braid, wearing a pink shirt, looking towards a school building. The building is orange with blue accents and a set of stairs. The text 'But that's not what everyone thought.' is overlaid on the building.

**But that's not what everyone thought.**

**“Girls can learn and think and speak out,  
just like boys,”**

said the World Vision friends in her village.

Sudha wanted to **know MORE.**

Could she go to school, too?

Could she learn and think and have **BIG ideas?**

The World Vision friends invited Sudha to join a children’s group. Each week, kids met to share their ideas and dream of ways to make their community amazing.

*My ideas matter!* Sudha thought.  
*I’m a girl, but I’m also part of something  
**big and important!***

The World Vision friends also made sure Sudha had the books, bags, pens, and paper she needed for school. So her parents let her go.

**It was the most EXCITING day.**



## Sudha loved school!

She learned a lot at the children's group meetings, too. Even though she had lots of opinions, she felt shy talking at first. But soon, she was talking in front of 120 other kids, sharing her thoughts on how they could make their community great.

Can you guess what Sudha said?

**“It’s not fair that girls should have to fight to go to school.**



**We need to make sure girls know their rights!”**

Today, Sudha is 14 years old. She talks to all the girls she meets, and their parents, too. She tells them that girls **can learn** and **speak up** and **chase their dreams**, just like boys can.

Sudha's dad doesn't think girls should stay home anymore. She's shown him just how much girls can do!

Sudha is studying hard so she can chase her dreams. She wants to join the government to help make her community, and others like it, even better.

**“After I joined the children’s group, I realised there are so many people out there who need help – not just me.**

**“So, I’ve set my goal and I’m working towards it!”** Sudha says.



**What about you?** What's your big idea? What big change would you like to be part of?





# SENURI

## THE TECH WHIZZ



**Senuri had had enough.**

**ENOUGH!**

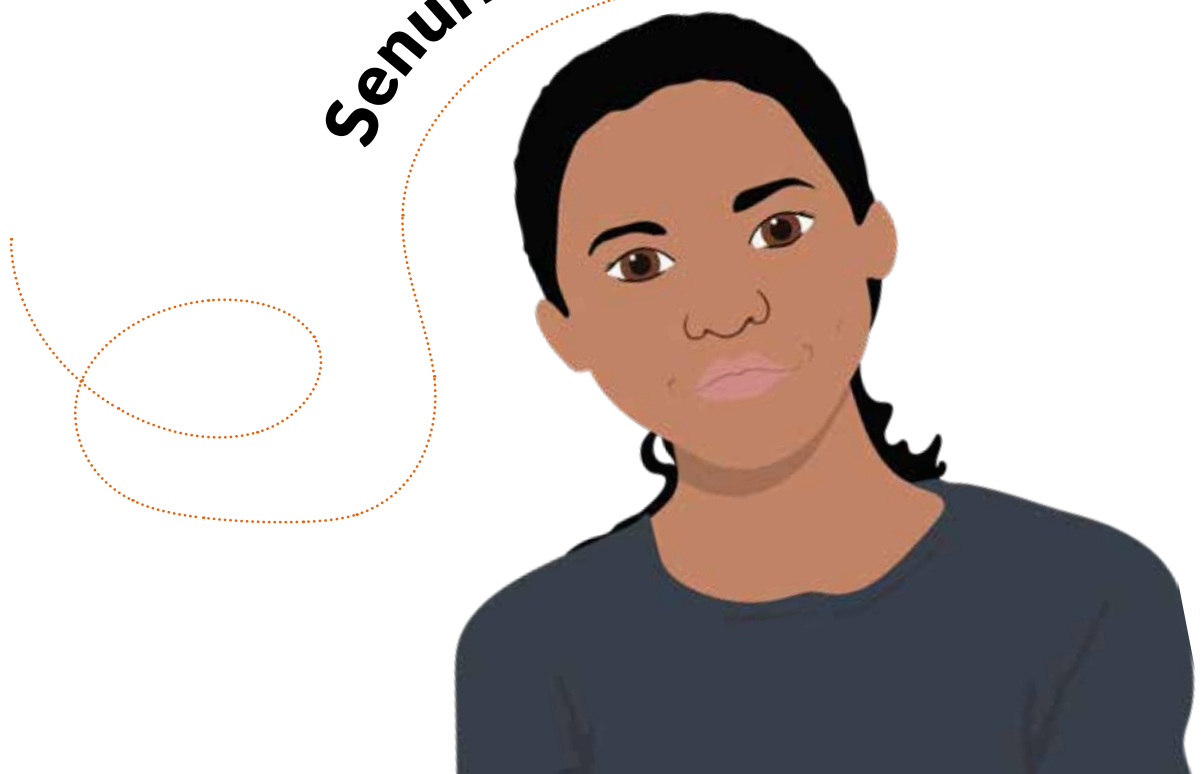
**“If you want kids to behave,  
you have to be tough on them!”**

That’s what lots of people in Senuri’s  
neighbourhood in Sri Lanka said.

But they weren’t talking about being sent to  
your room or having something taken away  
from you.

They were talking about punishing kids by  
hurting them. 😞

**Senuri didn’t agree.**



## **She knew kids – just like adults – had rights.**

Kids shouldn't have to live their lives in fear that someone would hurt them.

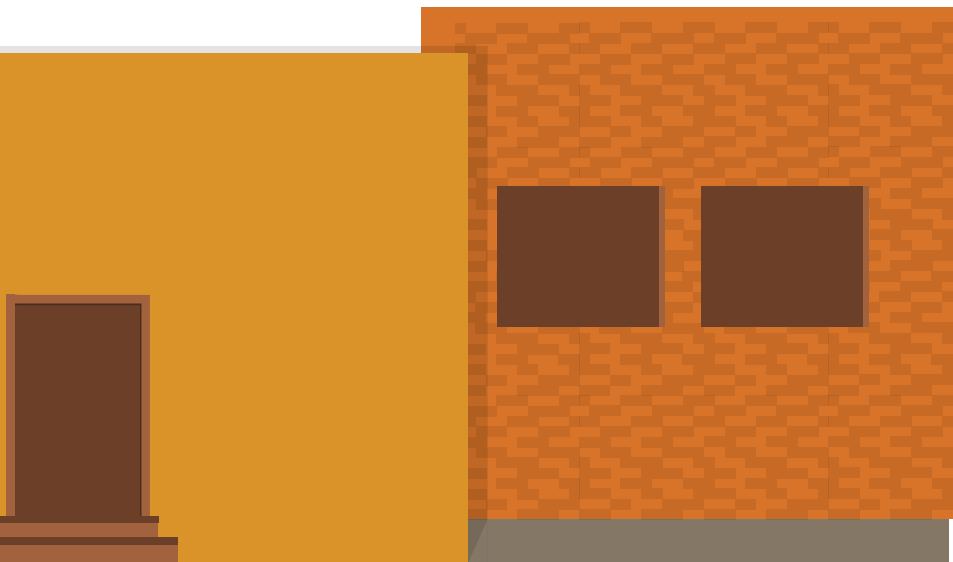
She also knew some kids in her neighbourhood didn't feel safe when they went home after school each day.

And that was a **BIG problem**.

*Kids need a way to get help if they need it, Senuri thought. But how?*

She didn't have the answer yet – but Senuri knew who she could ask for help.

Senuri had known World Vision friends in her community for eight years. In that time, she'd learned from them that kids like her could make **BIG things** happen – even bigger than adults sometimes.

An illustration of a house with a yellow wall and a brown door on the left. To the right, there is a brown wall with two dark brown rectangular windows. The house is set against a grey ground.

She'd also learned about her **rights and safety**, and lots of other things that would help her in the future.

**“It’s not okay that some kids are scared to be at home,”** Senuri said.

**“We need to find a way to stop it!”**

Senuri got together with some friends who agreed.

They **scratched** their heads, **scribbled** notes, **scrunched** up pages, and **scribbled** some more.



And then...

**“We know what to do! We’ll make an app!”**

Senuri exclaimed.

**“Almost everyone has a phone in their pocket – we’ll make sure they can use it to get help when they don’t feel safe!”**

The app would connect kids with help – like the closest police station – and would track where a kid was when they needed help.

**“It’s a great idea!”** said Senuri’s World Vision friends. They shared the idea with some other adults who wanted to protect kids, too, and found an app developer to make it happen.

Soon, Senuri and her friends were choosing background colours and dreaming up cartoon characters to make the app fun for kids.

“We don’t want it to be boring!” they told the app developer.

“Let’s have cool news and safety tips pop up, and a chat box so kids can talk and share ideas!”



Senuri and her friends were nervous the day the app was launched.

*Would kids like it?*

*Would it work?*

*Would it actually help keep kids safe?*

**Yes!**

Today, the app is used by kids all over Sri Lanka.



It works in three languages and kids can send pictures, voice memos, or videos to police to explain what's happening if they need help. A police officer investigates every single report that comes through the app, and kids can also use it to track what police are doing.

Senuri is now 17. She is **super-happy** the app is doing its job.

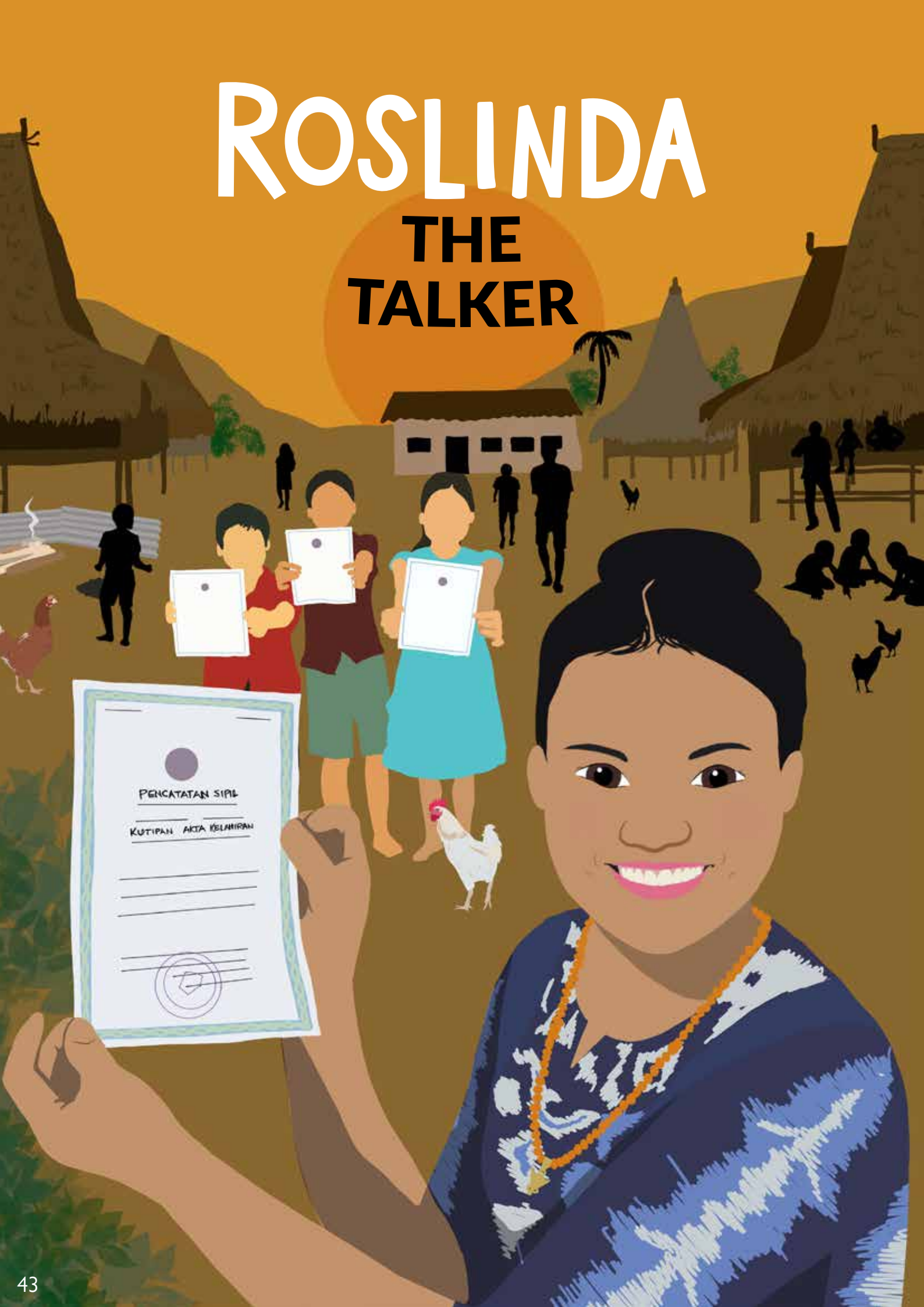
**“You can do big things when you use your voice,”** she says. **“I hope this app will help more kids who are afraid to speak up, to find their voice.”**



**What about you?** If you designed an app, what would it do?

# ROSLINDA

## THE TALKER



**As she looked out across the rows of important-looking women and men, dressed in fancy clothes and suits, Roslinda felt her tummy backflip.**

She took a deep breath.

**“Safety is every child’s right,”** she said, looking straight into their faces.

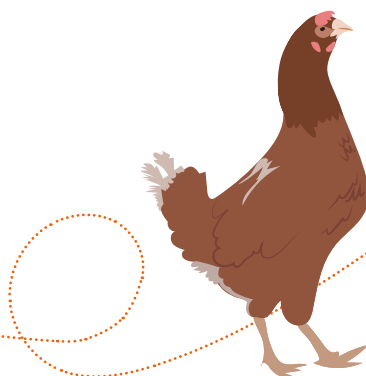
**“The world needs to work harder so that every child can be protected from violence of any kind.”**

That room was full of big thinkers and decision-makers from all over the world, and Roslinda was just 14 years old.

Yet, they listened to what she had to say.

They'd asked her to fly  
from her **small village**  
in **Indonesia**

all the way  
to **New York** to  
share her story



## What did Roslinda do that was so special?

Well, Roslinda and her friends had helped children in their village to get their very own birth certificates.

Do you have a birth certificate?

You might never have thought about it, but a birth certificate gives you superpowers.



With a birth certificate, you can see a **doctor** when you're sick, go to **school**, open a **bank account**, get a **passport**, or apply for a **driver's licence**.

## That is one amazing piece of paper!

Without a birth certificate, it's hard to do these things and so much more.

In some countries, if kids can't prove how old they are, they could be sent off to fight in the army, sent to work, or made to get married while they're still kids.

Just a few years ago, most kids in Roslinda's village didn't have birth certificates.

Because of that, many kids didn't go to school.

Instead of having fun and doing kid stuff, they worried about what would happen to them.

**All because they didn't have that piece of paper.**

Roslinda used to think that was just how things had to be. After all, they were just kids – they couldn't do anything about it.

**Could they?**





Then one day, she met some kids who thought differently.

They believed kids could **change their world**.

Their World Vision friends had shown them that kids had **great ideas** and could **take charge** to help solve problems in their community.

**“I want to be like those kids and make a difference, too. I’ll fight for the children in my village. I’ll speak up!”** Roslinda declared.

She and her friends started talking to their parents, village leaders, and everyone in between about birth certificates and how they would help make the village safe for kids.



They talked and talked and talked, and they wouldn’t give up. Finally, their efforts paid off.

Today, almost every child in Roslinda’s village has a birth certificate!

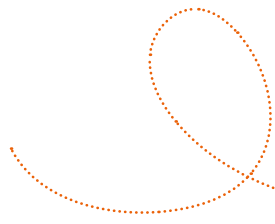
Village leaders have joined Roslinda and her friends in fighting for all kids to feel **safe, protected, cared** for... and to have that little piece of **superpowered paper**.

Roslinda is still speaking up for children. The big decision-makers invited her to speak again on new topics that were affecting kids in her community now. People from all over the world listened when Roslinda called!

When she finishes school, Roslinda wants to be a diplomat and represent her country in global conversations – because she’s seen how talking can change the world for good.



**What about you?** Have you ever spoken up to help someone else? What happened?



## Do you dare to dream?

All the girls featured in this book are being impacted through World Vision's child sponsorship programme, where sponsors empower children and their communities to break free from poverty, for good.

When you sponsor a child, you walk hand-in-hand with their community to fix the root causes of poverty that are holding children back. You enable essentials like clean water, nutritious food, healthcare, and even more – child protection, education, and economic opportunities. But most importantly, you empower them with the skills and tools to bring change that lasts to their community.

You also have the opportunity to nurture a unique connection with your sponsored child, which can build their confidence, happiness, and hope. It might just change your life, too. Will you dare to join us?

[wvi.org/child-sponsorship](http://wvi.org/child-sponsorship)





## Acknowledgements

Thank you Anita, Buyandorj, Dafroza, Semira, Jhesi, Isaac, Sudha, Daniel, Senuri and Roslinda – for sharing your personal stories with the world and reminding us to never give up on our dreams, no matter our circumstances.

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Thank you to World Vision's amazing child sponsors, who have helped the girls in this book, and millions more, to build brighter futures for themselves.

Finally, thank you to the book's production team: Elissa Webster, Mel Carswell, Arlene Bax, Jess Cox, Jen Taylor, and Steve Taylor.





# They didn't give up on their big ideas, even if others did!

Anita • Dafroza • Semira • Jhesi  
Sudha • Senuri • Roslinda

They were curious, determined, creative, and brave. They dreamed big and imagined things not how they were, but how they could be.

They believed they could change their world and they didn't give up until they did!

These stories are for the dreamers and the doers; those who want to do something amazing and won't rest until they do. Be careful... you might be changed forever if you read them.

