

CAMBODIA • VIETNAM  
BHUTAN • INDONESIA  
INDIA • MONGOLIA  
HONG KONG

TURKEY • ISRAEL  
JORDAN

ENGLAND • FRANCE  
SPAIN • SWITZERLAND



# Sharing The Luck

By Paloma Raffle

KENYA • SOUTH AFRICA  
ZIMBABWE • MOROCCO  
EGYPT

AUSTRALIA  
NEW ZEALAND

COLOMBIA  
PERU • USA



## STORIES

For kids who are curious  
About kids around the world  
By a kid who traveled for a year





## **Thank You.**

This book is dedicated to the children of the world. Thank you for inspiring me!

I could not have written this book on my own. I would like to thank my dad for taking me on this trip, encouraging me to share my observations, and supporting me through this big project. He also taught me how to edit and lay out a book. I would also like to thank my writing teacher, Malar, for teaching me how to structure essays. Thank you to Small World Travel for planning our trip and connecting us with amazing guides and activities. Thank you to all of my teachers and classmates at Cambridge Ellis, Bing, Ohlone, and The Girls' Middle School who have shown me that learning is fun and children are important. Thank you to my mom for taking a critical eye to this book and for saying yes to my dad when he had the crazy idea to travel around the world for a year. Last, but not least, thank you to Anika: I could not be a big sister without you.

Love,  
Paloma

August 2018



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# My Travels

### A thirteen-year-old's perspectives on the world.

This year I was so lucky to have the opportunity to travel around the world with my family and learn about a topic that interests me: Children. I learned almost all of the information in this book by listening to guides and observing how families live their day to day lives. Something which really surprised me was how children live such different lives in different countries, yet they all love having fun, playing with other children, and laughing with their friends. I loved talking to kids, sometimes with a guide's translations, as well as learning and investigating how they spend their free time (if they have any free time at all). I

enjoyed fitting a little bit more happiness into their days. I took photos of many of the kids, because some experiences just can't be put into words. Something I want to accomplish in this book is to make it a fun book to read and learn from, while still telling the truth.

This year has been filled with so many amazing adventures. We have been to 24 countries so far, most of which are included in this book. I have learned so much about different cultures, religions, and cuisines around the world. I hope you enjoy reading my book as much as I enjoyed writing it!

# Here's a short summary of each country we visited.

After some time on the West Coast of the **USA** and a stop at Pearl Harbor with my grandparents, we started our international travels in New Zealand. It was one of our favorite countries to visit because there are such kind people who live on beautiful land with rolling hills. It is also very comfortable and developed. We spent one week on my friend Ella's cousins' farm in rural New Zealand. We went to school for a day with them. It was such a fun day with kind teachers and warm students. On their family farm, we helped sheep give birth to lambs, and introduced orphaned lambs to new mothers. After our stay on the farm, we went to Queenstown where we sky dived for my birthday!

Next, we flew far north to **Mongolia**, one of the least densely populated countries in the world. We traveled to Ulaanbaatar, the capital, which was not a the nicest place to be. When the Communist government organized the country, they didn't take into consideration how much the city would grow, and they put coal plants right in the middle of the capital. This makes the air pollution terrible! We didn't spend much time in Ulaanbaatar, but we had to fly to the capital to get everywhere else in Mongolia. We went to Ulgii, a small town in western Mongolia near the border of Kazakhstan where we met many Kazakh people. Our primary motivation for traveling to Mongolia was to see the Golden Eagle Festival in Ulgii. The Kazakh people hunt fox with trained golden eagles, and once a year, they participate in a festival to show off their falconry and horseback riding skills. Mostly elderly men participate, but more and more young girls are joining for the opportunity to

do tricks on their horses while their eagles swoop down from a mountain and catch a rabbit skin that trails behind their horse. There was some chaos with the police and a drunk eagle hunter this year, but it was a fun experience anyway. There is a movie called, "The Eagle Huntress" about the first female eagle hunter in Mongolia. I would definitely recommend it. We met the girl who starred in that movie! We also spent a lot of time with a 7-year-old girl who is training her falcon, so she too can be an eagle huntress one day. After Ulgii, we also spent time in the Gobi Desert in southern Mongolia. The most vast place I have ever seen.

After **Mongolia**, we traveled to **India**, my favorite country of the whole year. It was so colorful and lively, although many of the people we met had cloudy eyes and were malnourished. We spent a few days near a tiger reserve, and although we didn't see any tigers, we saw many amazing animals such as a leopard, many species of deer, and lots of insects. We also traveled to Kumbhalgarh, where we worked with a non-profit organization called Me to We. I'd like to work with the same organization in Ecuador in the future. We visited a lot of schools and religious sites and ate my favorite foods of the year.

After India we traveled to **Bhutan**. In Bhutan, they are mainly focused on Buddhism and the beautiful mountains. People there make less than one dollar a day, but nobody is homeless or hungry and orphans are all taken into homes. Bhutan is in the Himalayas, and the mountains are amazing! We visited nunneries and monasteries where children go to school. Many families choose this type of schooling for their children and it is the best option for very poor children and orphans. Something that surprised my family is that the children don't learn math or science, only religion and how to copy religious documents! They devote all of their time to learning Buddhism. In Bhutan, people only eat rice and chilies. Almost every roof is covered with drying chilies and there are fields of rice in every direction.

**Indonesia** was our next stop. It was beautiful! My mom and sister spent a week in Bali while my dad and I went to a large island called Flores. We traveled to the Indonesian mountains and ocean. Flores has the most beautiful snorkeling in the world! It has super clean, clear, teal water with such colorful coral it looked like it was Photoshopped in real life! The mountains were beautiful, and we saw a crater lake that was bright turquoise. We went to a few schools there: One in a mountain and one by the ocean. We donated supplies to the schools, which we generally do everywhere we go. I taught a math lesson, we played a song on our ukulele for all of the children, and they performed a traditional dance for us. One of the schools we went to was in a remote, indigenous village, and we got a tour of the village. They showed us how they dance, how they light a fire, and how they make intricate designs on sarongs, a kind of skirt that the women wear there.

We met my mom and sister in Bali and continued on to **Australia**, which was a break from all-day, every-day touring in Asia. We were so happy to be in a developed country. We went to Sydney first where we visited friends with adorable twin babies. After Sydney we flew south to Melbourne where we stayed with a friend who I met in the hospital when I was one day old. We shared Thanksgiving dinner and I joined her at her all-girls school for a day. We also traveled to Tasmania where we saw many amazing animals and nature. After Tasmania, we flew north to Cairns where we stayed at The Botanical Ark where a couple collects endangered plants from all around the world and brings them to their huge backyard. We learned a lot about many different plants and where they came from. We also snorkeled in the Great Barrier Reef and avoided the abundant moon jellyfish (which don't sting!).

**Hong Kong** was a short, 4-day visit with friends. It was a very business-filled place, and although it's tiny, it is packed with people!

We traveled through Thailand to **Vietnam**

where we learned how to fish in the mud with our hands and how many motorbikes can fit in one city. We mud fished in a small village on a joyful, elderly pomelo farmer's land. He taught us how to drain the pond with net baskets so just the fish and the mud are left. It was a messy job! When we went to the city, we were shocked by how many motorbikes there were! The roads are filled with  $\frac{3}{4}$  motorbikes and  $\frac{1}{4}$  cars.

Next we traveled to **Cambodia**. This was one of my favorite experiences because my friend, Ella HF and her family joined us. We spent the first week sightseeing at Angkor Wat and other temples in Siem Reap. The second week we spent most of the time at a beautiful beach resort with crystal clear water.

Next, we flew across many countries to **Israel**. We had an amazing time there, spending time in the city and desert, and floating in the Dead Sea. We spent quite a bit of time in Jerusalem, learning about religions, and how three religions (Judaism, Islam, and Christianity), are fighting over that land. After Jerusalem, we went to the Dead Sea, where we floated on an invisible raft. Did you know that the Dead Sea is 1388 feet below sea level (the lowest place on earth)?!

We went to **Palestine** for just one day but we learned a lot. Many people there feel trapped in a cage. We visited the wall separating Palestine from Israel, and learned how that wall represented division between Palestine and Israel.

Next was **Egypt**. Egypt was not our favorite country because we were required by the US government to have two bodyguards at all times plus one guide, one driver, and one management person. Too many people looking after us! We visited many ancient Egyptian pyramids and tombs, which were all amazing. Ancient Egyptians ate similar foods to what we eat today! We also learned about the currency devaluation, and how it dropped  $\frac{2}{3}$  of its value overnight!

**South Africa** was our next stop. It was one of the most eye-opening countries for me. It

was an amazing place. We went to two places, Johannesburg and Cape Town. Johannesburg was the most segregated place I have ever seen in my life. Black South Africans and white South Africans are so segregated there, I only saw the two races together once. People there somehow have made it normal. Although apartheid ended, the country has not recovered. They have laws to support equality, but people's hearts and minds are still catching up.

We traveled up to **Zimbabwe**, which was really interesting. We learned about government and currency issues of the country, and we helped build a bio-digester in a family's yard. It uses their cows' poop to create gas for an automatic fire! We also observed families who lived in huts with round mud walls, dirt floors, and a straw roof just getting by in their day to day life, but they were still smiling and laughing with each other.

Next was **Kenya**, where we went on a safari and saw amazing wildlife. We also learned about Masai people and how they have carried on their traditions for generations and generations. They still use old inventions, despite newer, faster and more efficient ones. One example is a toothbrush tree! They brush their teeth with the bark and floss with the backs of the sticks. In Kenya we also learned about many animals, such as giraffes, elephants, lions, various species of deer, rhinos, hippos, and many birds.

Then we went back up to the western side of north Africa to **Morocco**. The medinas, or old cities, of Morocco have so many alleys packed with smells of spices, warm bread, rotting vegetables, and leather. They have tiny open shops on the larger alleyways, and some of the handicraft shops do metalworking, woodworking, and leather working. We stayed at a cooking school in the medina of Fes, and we only cooked with ingredients fresh from local vendors.

Then we went to our first European country, **Spain**. We stayed in Seville, a small city where everybody walks everywhere. There are only cars on the few main roads, but everywhere else

is a no car zone. It has super old architecture and buildings, and skinny colorful cobblestone alleyways, much cleaner than Morocco. The air was not as polluted as in Morocco, and it was easier to breathe. We stayed in Seville for almost 2 weeks to recharge. I worked on this book and started laying it out.

Next we stopped in **England**. It was so nice to be in an English-speaking country with any shop we wanted, from Whole Foods to a sushi shop. We were in England right before Easter so everything was decorated and we were able to find nice and cozy book shops. We also saw friends, went to museums, and took a tour about the history of World War II in London. Did you know that London's population just recently returned to what it was before the war over 80 years ago?

**France** was really nice and similar to how I remembered it from when we visited 4 years ago. The pastries and chocolate were amazing and the air felt so clean and fresh. We had a chocolate and pastry tasting tour which was tasty! We were able to go behind the scenes in a chocolatier, an ancient sourdough bakery, and a pastry bakery. Everybody was so absorbed in what they were making that they barely even looked up when we went in. We also went to a macaron shop to taste different macarons. That was a delicious day! We also visited the Eiffel Tower, the Louvre, and an Impressionist Museum, all of which were very cool.

We visited **Switzerland** next. Switzerland has beautiful mountains that look like huge powdered-sugar-dusted rocks. We went to Switzerland to visit one of my mom's cousins, and we had a great four days there.

After Switzerland, we returned to **Spain** to meet up with my grandparents who unfortunately ended up not being able to make it there. This time we were in Barcelona for a while and we learned about Gaudi, a famous Spanish architect whose work is based on patterns he sees in nature. We also went to Grenada and Cordoba to learn about the Moors and the Islamic and

Jewish histories in Spain. Finally, we returned to Seville where friends from Madrid visited us. The apartment where we stayed had a library so I was able to spend a lot of time working on this book again.

Next, we went to **Turkey**. It is amazing and nothing like what it sounds like in the news. It is beautiful, and it is full of open-hearted people. One day we were at a restaurant on the beach and we saw 5 old men adoring a one-year-old at their table. The air is clean, the food is delicious, and the land and water are amazing. We also traveled to Cappadocia. It is a city made up of beautiful volcanic rock mounds and is known for hot air balloon riding. We went on a hot air balloon at sunrise and it was amazing! We also visited a big city, Istanbul, and observed how people (and cats!!) live.

Next we went to the **Netherlands**, where we saw people riding their bikes (without helmets), shopping, and eating. There are canals lining most streets.

We went to Cambridge, Massachusetts for a couple weeks, where we connected with friends and enjoyed a little bit of the **USA**.

We also visited **Colombia** where we explored the colorful streets of Cartagena, tasted coffee and learned how to make chocolate directly from the bean. We also visited a center where pregnant teens go to finish their education and learn how to take care of their babies.

Next we visited **Peru** where we hiked up mountains and learned about the ancient Inca people. We also ate some exotic foods, like guinea pig! Did you know potatoes are indigenous to Peru?

I hope you enjoy my book!

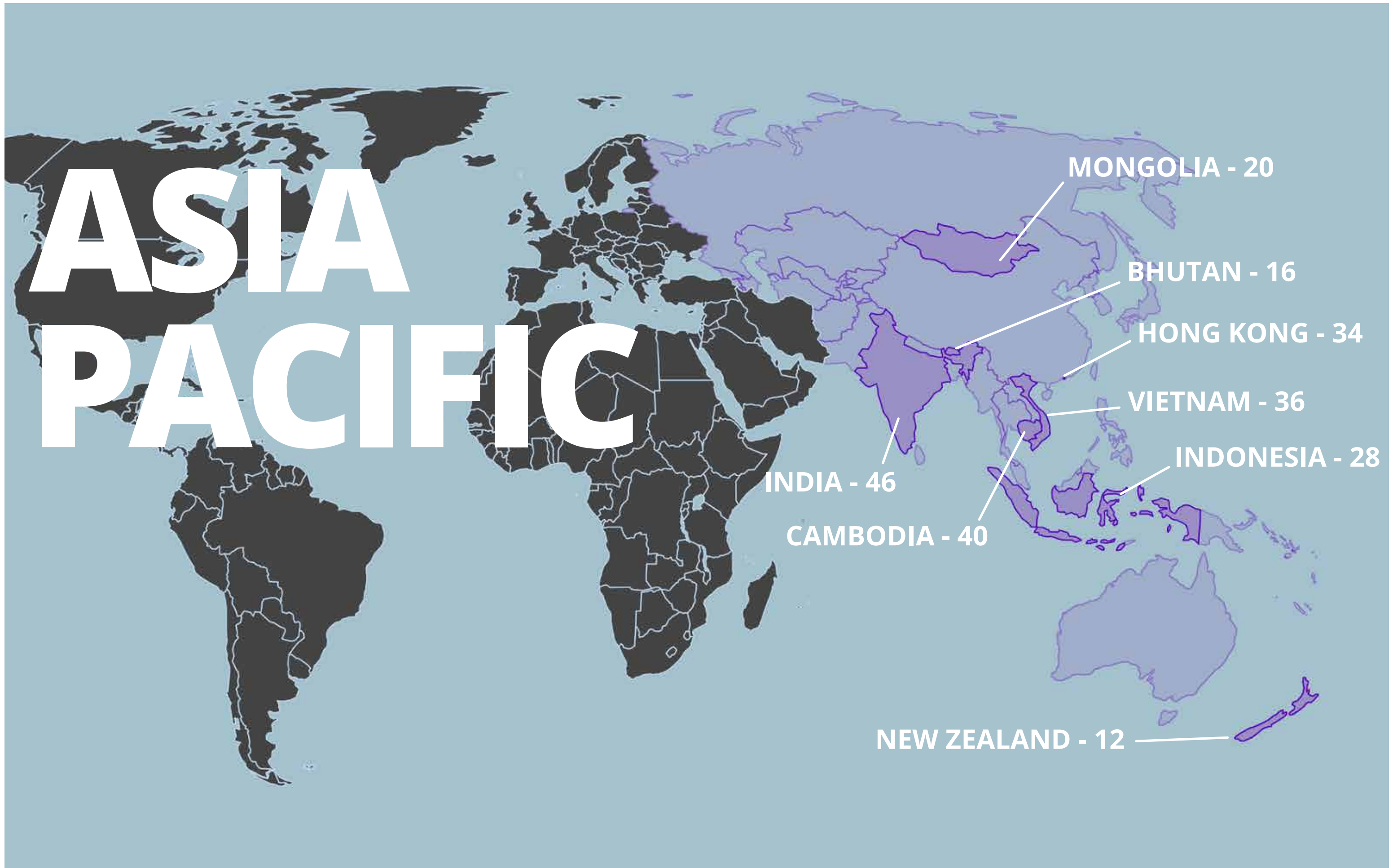
Love,  
Paloma

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The toys at the local market in Indonesia are alive! These chicks cost \$1.50 each. If you take care of them, they will grow into chickens.

# ASIA PACIFIC





**Population**  
4 million people,  
40 million sheep!

# New Zealand

- Living on a Farm

**When I spent the day in a 7th grade class at Ohakune elementary school, I studied the basics, with local children, including math, writing, reading, and PE.** There was a lot of time scheduled to play and exercise throughout the day. Every Wednesday, the kids go to the ski slope after lunch for some afternoon skiing.

**The school was very small, with only two classes per grade.** Every primary and secondary school includes Maori culture in the curriculum. Maoris are native people of New Zealand who make up 15 percent of the population. When children grow up they have many job options, similar to ones in the U.S. Because there is so much land, there is a higher percentage of people who are farmers with an additional job in New Zealand.

**In New Zealand, all people have access to clean water straight from the tap.** Andy, the dad of the farming family we stayed with, built a fence around his land because the Green Party, a political group in New Zealand, requires cows to be kept away from streams and rivers so that the natural waterways don't become polluted with cow manure. Andy's fence was built with the wires far apart so that the sheep can jump through to eat the grass, but the cows (and their poop) can't get too close to the stream.

## Sheep

One shepherd and 3 sheep dogs can move 3,000 sheep!

New Zealanders farm 19 breeds of sheep!



Some sheep are better for wool, while others are better for milk or meat.

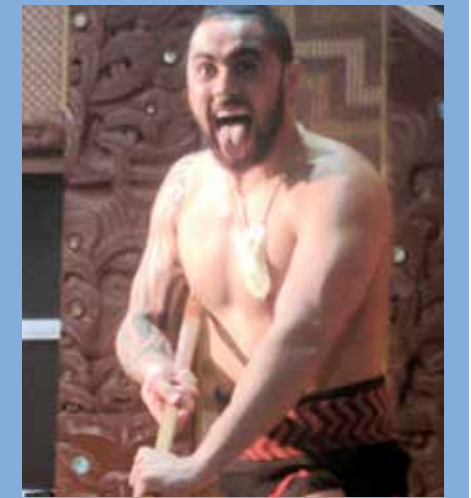
## Maori Culture

**Maoris are native New Zealanders.** They have lived in New Zealand for almost 800 years, long before European explorers found the large remote islands. Maori people define themselves by their Iwi (tribe), Hapu (sub-tribe), Maunga (mountain) and Awa (river).

**Traditional carvers** help to keep Maori culture alive by creating pieces of wooden art. Every piece carved tells a

story, which can be read by specialized Maori elders. The shape of the head, position of the body, and the patterns on the surface record memories of special occasions.

**Today Maori people live throughout New Zealand.** Many are trying very hard to keep their culture and language alive. They create attractions where they teach tourists and New Zealanders about Maori culture and its history.



# DRIVING A TRACTOR

## In rural New Zealand

*Written in the local boy's perspective*

You slide into the driver's seat. It already feels different than the passenger's seat. You feel a sense of responsibility, driving a \$100,000 tractor, which your dad points out is worth more than you. You throw him a glare. You pull back a trigger and hear the tractor start making a groaning sound. You push the stick forward and start driving. You turn a big gray steering wheel bigger than your head. You travel over bumps. You are driving on a hilly cow pasture. It is raining so you have to be careful to not let the tractor slip by steering away from the mud, but you don't avoid the puddles. You splash through a HUGE puddle and laugh. You don't think you will ever drive through a bigger puddle. Your dad tells you the puddle was a meter deep.

It is not hard to avoid the cows because they are all in a line eating a hay and alfalfa mix that your dad just delivered to them from the rotating machine attached to the back of the tractor. The hay used to be in a wheel all rolled up, but now it is mostly in the cows' stomachs. You go over one more bump and decide to refocus on the road. You approach three calves and their overprotective mom. Your dad who is sitting in the passenger seat beside you tells you to drive quietly so you don't scare them away. You put your foot on the brakes and "VROOM!" Too fast! You realize you have turned the speed all the way up to C speed by accident. You quickly turn it back down to A speed, but the mama cows have already looked your way. You turn the tractor around and quickly get out of their sight. You don't want to be in the path of those mama cows when they get mad!

You slowly bring the tractor to a stop and your dad tells you to give your brother a turn. You groan and hop out of the tractor. Holding your rugby ball in your right hand, you head on over to say hello to one of the many, many sheep in your very big backyard.



Andy loves his New Zealand sheep, playing rugby, and driving his dad's tractor.





# BHUTAN

**A Buddhist Country**

## Gross National Happiness

### Most countries measure their economic value

in how much money they can make by selling their products to other countries; this is called Gross Domestic Product, or GDP. Bhutan's king decided to introduce a new concept — Gross National Happiness, which measures the population's "wealth" and progress. They were a very

private country until a few years ago. Now, Bhutan allows a limited number of tourists into the country each year. Bhutan is a very poor country, but nobody is homeless, there are no orphans, and everybody is employed. They believe everyone should help one another, and they are leading by example.

### The Bhutanese are mostly Buddhist.

They love their land and pray to their mountains. They have created some of the most famous monasteries, built into mountainside cliffs. The Tiger's Nest, a famous Bhutanese landmark, has 12 monasteries in an ancient cave where a famous monk prayed and lived many hundreds of years ago.

**1** Children who go to school in monasteries don't learn math and science!

Their lessons focus on rewriting religious passages.

**2** People make less than a dollar a day,

but nobody is homeless, orphans are taken care of, and everybody has a job. The monasteries feed and house people if they need extra help.

**3** Not everyone has been happy in Bhutan.

Some people from Nepal didn't follow the dress code, and they were forced to leave.

## FOOD

### People in Bhutan eat rice and chilies.

They pile the rice on their plates like a mountain with a spoonful of chilies on top. Bhutan grows a lot of rice so it is their main food staple. Children often work in the fields with their parents to produce rice for their families. If you drive around Bhutan, you will think everyone has a red roof, but it is actually just a steel roof with hundreds or even thousands of drying chilies!



Cooking chili-cheese

## EDUCATION



Girls work in their rice fields after school.

### Children who don't live in monasteries go to public school.

We met one high schooler who was drying rice in her neighbor's field. She is the only person in her town going to high school, and she wants to be a media writer or a journalist for their public TV station. She speaks English very well, because she received books from tourists in English and she rereads them over and over again until she understood them. She wants to go to college, although there is only a 40% acceptance rate. If she doesn't get in, she will become a rice farmer and follow in the footsteps of generations and generations before her.

## RELIGION

### Buddhism is the main religion in Bhutan.

Many children in Bhutan become Buddhist nuns or monks. Buddhists believe everyone should be happy and compassionate towards every living thing, even organisms as small as a blade of grass. In Bhutan, prayer flags blow in the wind and the Bhutanese people believe the flags spread compassion and prayers through the mountains.



A Buddha stands tall on a mountain.



## Growing up in a Bhutanese monastery

**Many children grow up in monasteries.** Some have chosen to become monks or nuns, while others are orphans, outcasts, or from very poor families. Monasteries take good care of the children and feed them well.

**We met two thirteen year olds in their monastery.** One of them had lived there since she was a baby because her parents couldn't take care of her, while the other had chosen to go there about a year before, when she was 12. She decided she wanted to become a Buddhist nun.

## Fun Facts

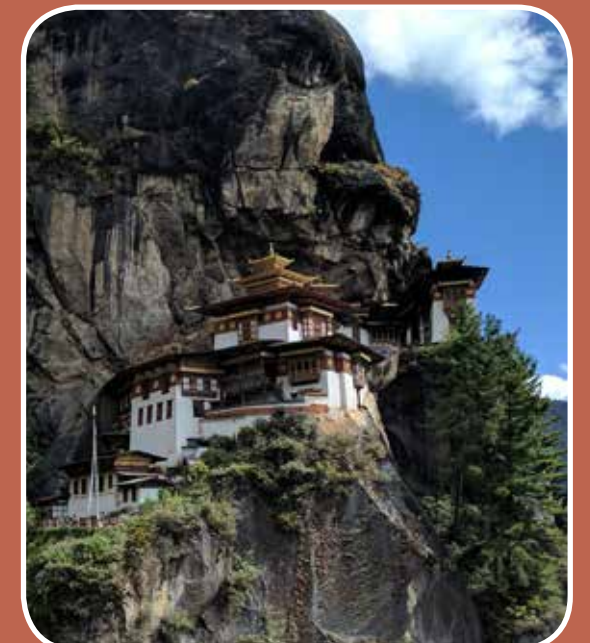
**1** Everyone wears national uniforms.

The men wear long skirts!



**2** Bhutan is in the Himalayas.

The tallest mountains in the world!



**3** 80% of people in Bhutan are farmers.

Mainly rice farmers, but many people also farm chilies on their roofs.

**4** Tiger's Nest is Bhutan's most famous monument.

Many temples are built into a cliff thousands of feet above sea level. Bhutanese love traditional architecture, and many buildings in Bhutan look similar to Tiger's Nest.



# MONGOLIA

## Every Child Deserves To Breathe Easily

**Ulaanbaatar is the coldest capital in the world.** To stay warm, people burn a lot of coal, which pollutes the air. The smog makes children's throats burn and their lungs ache. Around 60% of Ulaanbaatar's population live in rural Mongolia. Families who live in gers, a kind of yurt, use coal to keep their gers warm in the cold winters, where temperatures can drop to -76

degrees Fahrenheit. The coal pollutes the air inside the house where the children sleep, but it beats being cold. Mongolia is in the top ten list for most polluted countries in the whole world. Air pollution puts children at high risk of pneumonia and other lung conditions.

**When we were there, we saw many children coughing because it was**

**so hard to breathe.** Your lungs provide oxygen to every organ and cell in your body, so when their lungs are damaged because of dirty air, they are not able to deliver enough oxygen. As a result, children's organs become damaged. Pneumonia, a lung disease, is the second most common cause of death for Mongolian children ages 0-5.

1

Pneumonia is the second most common cause of death for children ages 0-5.

2

Mongolians live in a dry, cold desert, where temperatures can drop to -76° Fahrenheit!

3

Mongolia is the 4th least densely populated country in the whole world!



Kids in a rural Mongolian school have a food fair.

## FOOD

**Mongolians eat a lot of simple foods like fried meat dumplings and milk tea.** Children are chubbier because they don't have fresh fruits and vegetables and they need to stay warm in the cold, dry climate. Many Mongolian children do not get enough variety of food for a balanced diet. In the desert, people drink "milk tea," a soup-like drink made with camel, yak, goat, sheep, cow, or horse milk, mixed with salt and weak tea.

**Rural Mongolians are nomads.** They live in gers, which are collapsible tents with a cylinder bottom and a cone on top. Rugs line the floors and walls, and wooden posts go up to the ceiling. The walls and roofs are covered with wool rugs that nomads make from their animals' hair and wool, which keep their gers warm in the cold Mongolian climate. Nomads only live in gers in the warmer months, which may still be below freezing, and move to warmer stone houses in the cold, harsh winters.

## HOME



My sister and I in front of our ger.



## GENGHIS KHAN

**Genghis Khan** (pronounced "Jeen-giss Kawn") is remembered as a murderous invader in most of the world, but in Mongolia he is revered as the person who united all of the Mongolian tribes.

# Education and Health Care Free for Everyone

Because Mongolia was recently a communist country, services such as medical care and education are free to everyone. In the capital we visited an eye doctor who was very experienced. Mongolia also has a good education system, because under communism the government wanted everyone to be the same, so everyone had to go to school. In the rural Mongolian desert school, children were learning the same math that we learn in private schools in the USA.

We visited two schools in Mongolia: a small, rural school in the Gobi desert and a big private school in the capital Ulaanbaatar. In the rural school, children are learning the same advanced math that we learn

in California, surprising for a rural Mongolian school.

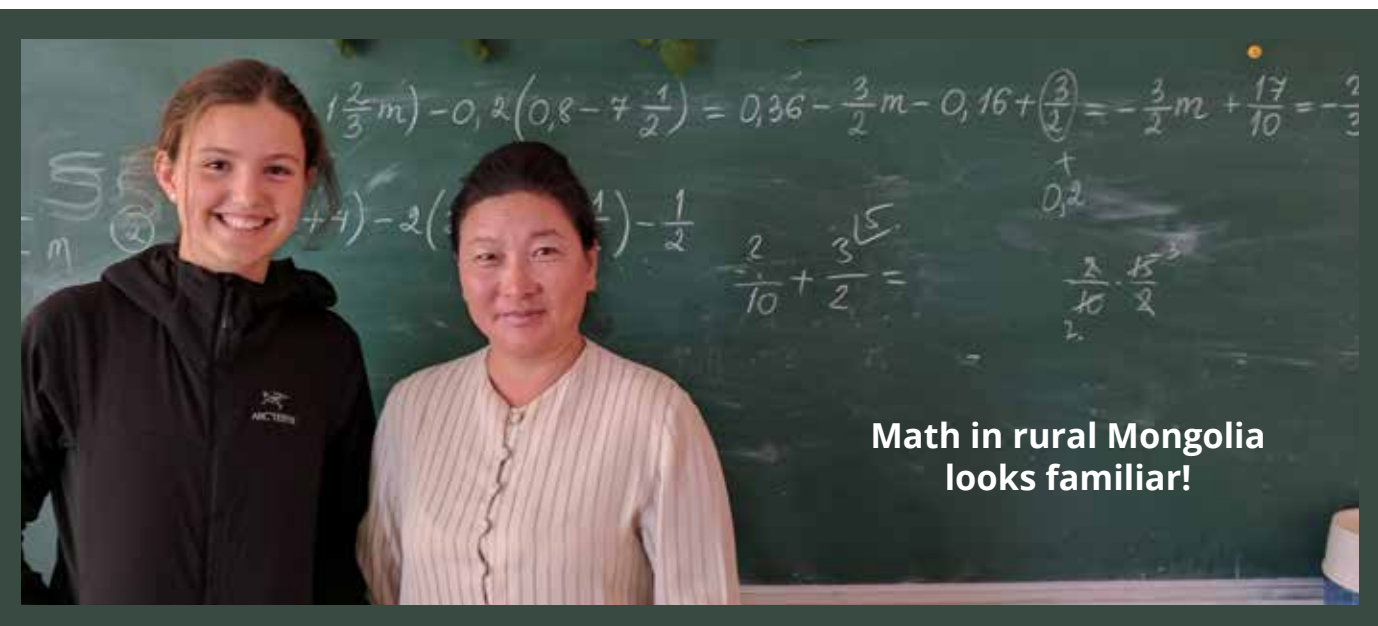
**They came up with a plan: about 10 students decided to go to his neighbor's house...**

The urban private school was one of the nicest I have ever been to. It had a chess class, a cafe, and a sewing room. It has an efficient system; the students either go to school in the morning or afternoon so the teachers can teach two sessions per day. The students all looked happy as they sewed and learned spelling and math.

We talked to the only American teacher at the school, and he told us a funny

story about his students. When he first arrived in Mongolia, he did not know many Mongolian customs. If the students needed help after school with their homework, they would knock on his door and ask for help. He thought it was pretty weird, and he sent them away, day after day, until finally the kids figured out they were going to need to come up with a different plan. They decided about 10 students would go to his neighbor's house and insist that his neighbor invite their English teacher over for tea.

He enjoyed a cup of his neighbor's tea before he realized the students plan. His happy students were able to learn more English.



Mongolia has many valuable minerals underground, but they don't have experienced people to mine for them, so they need help from foreign mining companies. Mongolians only receive 1/3 of the money when mining companies sell the minerals.



## JOBS



## RELIGION

**Because Mongolia was Communist recently,** and the Communists forbid religion, there's a lot more atheism in Mongolia than other Asian countries we visited. We met a very important Buddhist monk, and when our guide told him that my dad was Jewish, he immediately stood up and shook my dad's hand, honored, the first Jewish person he had ever met.

## AIR POLLUTION

**Try it yourself: breathe like a Mongolian.**

Get a toilet paper tube. Cover both ends with a piece of cloth. Blow air through the tube. Now try adding a little bit of dirt between the two pieces of cloth. Try blowing again. Is it harder to blow? This is how children in Mongolia breathe everyday.



# Five Treasure Animals of Mongolia

The children in rural areas mostly eat meat and dairy because it is too cold to farm plants. They farm five treasure animals: camels, horses, goats, sheep, and cows. These animals provide three things to eat: meat, milk, and blood. They mix blood into their milk to get extra protein! They have figured out a certain way to bleed the animals without killing them.

## Horses

**The eagle hunters ride horses.** Horses are their most valued animal because they use them as a form of transportation and they are necessary for eagle hunting.



## Cows

Cows are highly valued for their meat, blood, and milk. They mainly use cow milk for milk tea and cheese, although they enjoy milk from all of the other animals too.

## Camels

There are only Bactrian (two-humped) camels in Mongolia. Their humps are made up of fat and provide water and energy on long journeys in the cold desert.



## Goats

Goats in Mongolia produce 1/3 of the world's cashmere! The goats are destroying the grassland because they rip up plants by their roots instead of just eating the leaves.



## Sheep

Mongolians use sheep wool for their clothing and the walls and roofs of their gers. Sheep milk and meat is their main source of food. They also use sheep dung for fuel!



A-Muilder's Mongolian falcon is happiest on her head.



# I am A-Muilder

I wake up every morning, in my dusty ger down in the valley. I start my day by feeding and training my falcon. She loves it when I take her out and up the mountain for a short flight. I am training to be an eagle huntress. My uncle is an eagle hunter, and I train with him. Every morning he drives me to school over dusty pebbles, making a road anywhere he wishes, with none already created for us. Every morning I wonder how he knows where to go.

My school is an off-white color. My favorite subject in school is math because it's really hard. In my school we also learn how to write in English. I love how English letters look. In Mongolia we use Russian letters, which I have gotten bored of by now. I am already 7. We are more advanced in math than other countries because Russia has such good mathematicians and they conquered Mongolia. Mongolia has a good educational system because it used to be a communist country, and under communism the government wanted everyone to be the same, so everyone had to go to school.

Everyday when I come home from school my parents are working hard at their household duties. My mom is usually cooking, cleaning, taking care of my little brother and sister, or welcoming guests into the house with treats, like cheese curds and cookies. My siblings and I love when guests come, because we always get the leftovers. My dad is usually herding the goats, sheep and horses on his favorite horse, Jochi, the one he got on his fifteenth birthday. Jochi is getting old, so my dad sometimes has to switch to another horse. He also trains his eagle every day. He lets his eagle have a bite to eat, a piece of a smaller bird or sometimes even a rabbit — but only if his eagle can catch one!

I love watching the eagle glide over the rolling hills, and then swoop down for its lunch. My dad and uncle are training me to be an eagle huntress. I am still in the first generation of girl eagle huntresses. Before our generation, it was only men who hunted with eagles.



A-Muilder laughs with her uncle.



My sister and I laugh and play with A-Muilder.



This fishing village was rebuilt after being destroyed in the last tsunami.

# Indonesia Many Islands, Many Cultures

**Indonesia has 22,000 islands and 17,000 active volcanoes!**

**Just think how many volcanoes are underwater!** When volcanoes underwater erupt, they cause earthquakes, which send out ripples all the way to shore. These ripples are actually huge waves, which are also known as tsunamis. Tsunamis can threaten homes near the shore. 20 years ago, in one stilted fishing village on the island of Flores, a tsunami destroyed all the homes and killed all of the people. They had to rebuild their

**Climate change is also threatening seaside homes.** One reason is because a warmer earth means more tropical storms, which can blow houses down. Another reason is that the ocean is getting taller as glaciers melt. This causes sea level rise. Why does it rise? Imagine you have a glass full of ice cubes. The ice cubes float above the surface of water, and when the ice cubes melt there is more water, so it rises. The homes in Indonesia are weak and brittle so they break. Homes near the water get carried away.



**When volcanoes underwater erupt, they cause earthquakes, which send out ripples all the way to shore. These ripples are actually huge waves, which are also known as tsunamis.**

## Rising Sea Level

**Q:** Why does global warming cause sea level rise?

**A:** Earth's continents are covered with glaciers, which are mountains made of ice. These glaciers are melting as the earth warms up. When they melt, the glacial water flows into the ocean and the sea level rises.

### Try It Yourself!

**1** Mark a clear glass with a piece of tape. Put a few rocks in the bottom. The rocks are like earth's continents.

**2** Cover the rocks part-way with water. This water is like the oceans. Mark the "ocean level" on the piece of tape.



**3** Add some ice cubes – our "glaciers" – on top of the rocks. Now wait for them to melt.

**4** After the "glaciers" have melted, mark the new water level on the tape.



**Did the water level change?** It should be higher, because the ice cubes were "on land" above the surface of water, and when they melted there was more "ocean" water, causing the level to rise.



Motherhood started at age 15 for this Indonesian girl.

# I AM INDHA, A YOUNG MOTHER

**I live here, on a stilt house, handcrafted from bamboo, pounded into the mud.** I sleep on the patterned rug, given to me by my mother. I lie there, every night trying and trying to fall asleep, but instead I roll over. I roll over to check on my children. My baby is only 8 months old. The night is the only time my three-year-old stays in one place. I look at the sores on their bodies. Small red ones on their legs and arms. I look outside. I see water lined with trash. I look out beyond our small floating village. I see clean, clear ocean, sparkling.

I have not left my village since my three-year-old was born. I remember seeing him for the first time. That is when it hit me. I was going to be a mom. A fifteen-year-old mom. I watched him scream and wiggle, before he finally fell asleep in my arms.

Our village is Muslim, different from the other Christian villages surrounding mine. I wear a hijab every day and every night, but I take it off when tourists walk through. Every night, I fall asleep with my son on my chest. His father sleeps right beside me. He is not my spouse. He is my son's father, the father who is not willing to change the diapers. Now, I look over at him, asleep. He is a fisherman from Sulawesi. Twenty years ago a tsunami wrapped around his small village, along with some neighboring villages as well. It came and it left, and it did not bother to leave anything for anybody. But it brought my son's father to me. Now I enjoy them, raising them with my mother's help.

## FOOD

**Children in Indonesia are very small - more than 1 in 3 kids don't get enough food to eat.** Indonesian food consists of a lot of fish and chillies. In Indonesia they also have a lot of rice.



These three year olds roam their fishing village and play in puddles.

## WATER

**In Indonesia not all towns have access to running water.** Similar to many other countries, they have to cook the water before they drink it to kill bacteria that live in the water.

## RELIGION

**Indonesia is the largest Muslim country in the world, with 12.6% of all Muslims living there!** The islands are naturally isolated, which allows people on them to form unique cultures on separate islands. Some islands have different dominant religions. For example, the island of Bali is mostly Hindu, while the island of Flores is mostly Christian.



A Balinese dance celebrates Hindu traditions.





I write addition problems on the blackboard for elementary students.

# Indonesian Mountain School

**The children look happy at the dusty school.** They are a lot shorter than children in the USA, but this is typical in Indonesia. Some of them are barefoot, but many wear flip flops made from plastic sheets and rubber. They all wear identical uniforms: Dusty white collared shirts with shorts for the boys and skirts for the girls. The children are told to make their clothes last as long as possible so that they will not have to pay for new ones, as they have little money to spare.



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**The 12 year-olds and the 6 year-olds make similar mistakes adding and subtracting simple numbers, which makes me question how much the older ones learned in six years at their school.**

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left. Normally the kids have classes separately, but now they all squish into one classroom. They sing us three songs and dance. In return, we sing them two songs on the ukulele — “Someone to Lava,” and “You are My Sunshine.”

Most of the children live in the indigenous village right across the street, but some of them have to walk two hours down a mountain road to get home from school every afternoon. Since it is after school, only about 50 students are

Each child gets a new simple notebook and a new pen. I teach them addition and subtraction. When I check their work, the 12 year-olds and the 6-year-olds have made similar mistakes adding and subtracting simple numbers, which makes me question how much the older ones learned in six years at their school. Normally, the older kids would do much better than the younger ones! They look happy, but it doesn't look like they are learning much.





# Hong Kong

The skies of Hong Kong.

## Living as a Foreigner

**Hong Kong is a major trading hub for China** so people come from all over the world to do business there, making it a very international city. We visited an American family in Hong Kong. The mom and dad are close friends of my parents. They are among many American and British immigrants. They live in an “expat neighborhood”, which is a bit like a Chinatown in a major American city, but in reverse. So many people are foreigners, and they speak their foreign languages to each other and eat their foreign food together. Our friends, the Huangs, speak English and Mandarin. They eat a combination of Chinese and

American foods, such as pasta, pizza, and dumplings.

**The Huangs have a woman from the Philippines who lives and works in their house**, similar to other British and American families. She takes care of the kids, cleans the house and cooks the food. On Sunday, her day off, she visits all of the other women from the Philippines and Indonesia in a town square. They sit on cardboard boxes and eat their traditional lunches together. About 500 of them gather every week and remember their homes and families.

**Hong Kong was ruled by the British until 1997.**

Recently, many British and American children have moved to Hong Kong because there are so many job opportunities for their parents. Our friends, Niamh and Angus, ages 10 and 7, go to a typical British-American international school, learning similar curricula to children in America. Their school is very big and familiar looking to me.

**Many Americans live in Hong Kong because so many people speak English and have a similar lifestyle**, even though the city is part of China. I learned how easy it could be to live life in a neighborhood with other immigrants like you.

## Did You Know?

Hong Kong was under the British empire until 1997 when it was given back to China, giving it a mix of British and Chinese influences.

# I am American

A voice of an American immigrant

I live in Hong Kong—not America

I play with other American kids—very few Hong Kong residents

I speak English—not Chinese

I eat spaghetti and pizza—not many noodles and dumplings

I celebrate Christmas—more than Chinese New Year

I am American—not Chinese





**In Vietnam the dominant religion is — no religion (80.8%)! Since it is still a communist country, people don't believe in religion. They think communism is a religion of its own.**

## A Veteran's Story

**Forty-four years ago there was a civil war in Vietnam between the north and the south Vietnamese.** It was a political argument about what kind of government they should have. The north wanted communism and the south wanted a democracy and free market capitalism. The U.S. participated in the war in its last 10 years, and many U.S. soldiers died fighting in Vietnam.

Communists in southern Vietnam dug tunnels underground to stay alive. We talked to Giang who entered these tunnels when he was a teenager, and lived there for twelve years. He had to be careful because there were traps planted in the tunnels for the American soldiers. The passages were so tiny; American soldiers would not fit into them. Thousands of Vietnamese squeezed into this underground maze, and they were never comfortable. But they were safe, and stayed alive. Giang got married in these tunnels, and had two children there before the war was over, when everyone was able to come out and breathe fresh air again.

# Vietnam

● Simple Lives, Complex Politics

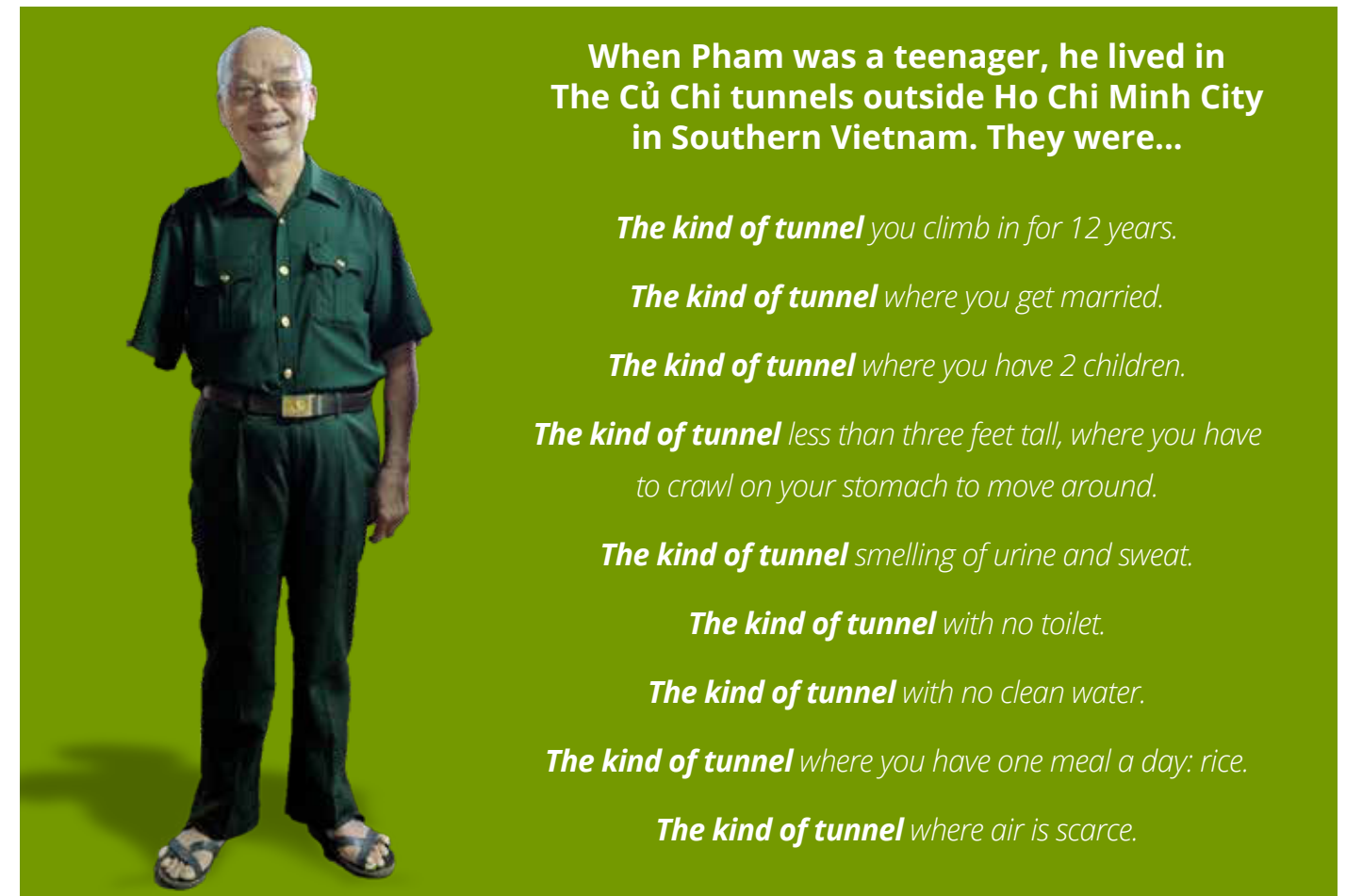
**Vietnam is the fifth largest producer of rice in the world!** This is the main staple for Vietnamese people. Some rice farmers make just enough rice for their families, while others make so much they can sell extra.

Vietnamese food is a very fish-filled cuisine because there is water everywhere. It is mostly made up of fish, noodle soup and rice pancakes. Some children I saw looked like they had to work for their food, standing in the streets and selling tourist souvenirs. Others

looked like they just sat down at the table and received a meal.

**Vietnamese people worry that China may take their water away.** Vietnam depends on the Mekong River to flood southern Vietnam every year. China is at the beginning of the Mekong river and Vietnam is the sixth country in line to receive water from the river. The Chinese government is building many dams on the river within China. Someday they may take all the water for themselves.

**Vietnam is the fifth largest producer of rice in the world! Improvements in farming equipment and techniques have allowed the Vietnamese to produce 2-3 rice harvests per year.**



**When Pham was a teenager, he lived in The Củ Chi tunnels outside Ho Chi Minh City in Southern Vietnam. They were...**

*The kind of tunnel you climb in for 12 years.*

*The kind of tunnel where you get married.*

*The kind of tunnel where you have 2 children.*

*The kind of tunnel less than three feet tall, where you have to crawl on your stomach to move around.*

*The kind of tunnel smelling of urine and sweat.*

*The kind of tunnel with no toilet.*

*The kind of tunnel with no clean water.*

*The kind of tunnel where you have one meal a day: rice.*

*The kind of tunnel where air is scarce.*



## FOOD & WATER

**We biked on red gravel roads, slipping and sliding after that night's rain.** We walked into the farmhouse and were greeted by a short, jolly, and happy elderly man — his name was Pham. Pham offered us tea and coconut water and seated us in front of his father's altar. It was decorated with sweet treats, flowers, money, and small wooden sculptures. We walked further into his house and saw a very simple kitchen in the back of the house and a small room with mats on the floor for sleeping.

There were also a few hammocks scattered around their yard. He said he had 40-50 acres to sustain his life but he only really needed to end up with 1x2 meters in the end (for his grave).

**"We learned how to catch fish with our bare hands."**

Pham gave us a small tour of his orchards, showing us all of the fruit and allowing us to taste everything. He grew a lot of pomelos. Then we jumped into a small mud pond and emptied all

the water out of the pond with a woven basket until the pond was dry. We learned how to catch fish with our bare hands. It was really hard because they were so slippery! We walked in the fish filled mud and tried to grab the slippery 12 inch fish with our hands. Once we finished, we threw them into a plastic bucket while they were still alive!

After making sure the fish were all dead, Pham's wife took out squeezed out the fish's insides. We took a stick and stuck it through the mouth of the fish, and held it over the grill.

### Mud fishing in Vietnam

Trap fish in pond, drain the pond, catch fish in the mud. Watch out! They are slippery! Eat the fish and enjoy. **Beware: mud fish may taste a little bit like ... mud!**

Next time you want to grill a fish, stick a stick through the mouth of the whole fish and out the other side. Then stick it over a grill or fire, and roast! In minutes you will have perfectly roasted fish.



**Children we met in Vietnam looked a lot healthier than children in other parts of Asia we visited.** The children looked like they all ate enough, and they ate well. Improvements in farming have allowed the Vietnamese to produce 2-3 rice harvests per year! When you have extra rice, you will always have enough. They also have access to freshwater and saltwater fish, so they get enough protein in their diet.

## HEALTH



Vietnamese people buy fresh fish every day.

We spotted an after-school math tutoring session in a garage.



## SCHOOL

**Kids we talked to don't learn much in school, nor do they like it.** We had dinner with two 10-year-olds in different places, and they both said school was boring, the teachers were too strict, they didn't learn much, and they can't move out of their seats all day. They also said you cannot speak during school. Luckily, about half of the country has access to the internet, and they can learn a lot from watching YouTube. They both learned English from watching youtube videos, not from their English teacher.

## JOBS

**Kids in Vietnam hope to get a good job, such as a doctor or a teacher, but people in Vietnam usually follow in their parents footsteps and do whatever their parents do.** Many rural children become rice farmers because they don't know about other opportunities, so they stop going to school around age 12 and help their parents on their farms.



The floods bring water and work.



# Floating Homes

Living on Tonle Sap Lake in Northern Cambodia

We saw houseboats resting on bamboo rafts, nestled in mangrove trees in the Tonle Sap lake in northern Cambodia. These fishermen travel up and down the lake to follow the seasonal water levels. The village is far away from land, so daily activities like cooking, cleaning and going to the bathroom happen in or on the lake. This can be a problem because while villagers poop far in the distance so waste doesn't stink up the village, their single water source gets contaminated anyway.

(Buddhist temples always have a clean water source nearby.) Some people will travel to a deeper part of the lake to

**The village is far away from land, so daily activities like cooking, cleaning and going to the bathroom happen in or on the lake.**

Access to clean drinking water is a challenge here. Most villagers buy drinking water in large blue water bottles from a local company, because they don't have time or money to travel all the way to a Buddhist temple on land.

collect water which they filter, because water farther from the village is safer to drink. If villagers drink straight from the lake around them, they will get sick; even if they boil the water.

# Cambodia • The cost of Civil War

**What is a civil war?** A civil war is a war within a country. The Khmer Rouge was a group of people who won the Cambodian civil war 40 years ago. They killed all of the educated Cambodians, and the economy, education and health care in Cambodia are still very poor today. Members of the Khmer Rouge are still in powerful positions in Cambodia's government, and people are still afraid of them. In Cambodia there is still no freedom of speech, and if you say bad things about the government, Cambodians say you will disappear.

**We went to one rural stilt village in Cambodia, where 100 percent of the children and adults do not have enough food to eat.** Rice is their main staple food, and they often don't get enough protein with their rice. They don't have any idea of what protein is; they only understand the idea of an empty belly or full belly. While local charities try to help, they only do so much. The charity we worked with handed out bread with sweetened condensed milk to the kids, which would fill them up for a few hours but would not help to give them enough nutrition or a balanced diet.

**Children usually follow in their parents' footsteps.** Many children of rice farmers will drop out of school at age 12 to help on the family farm. Their parents do not understand that staying in school could help them get better paying jobs when they grow up. Middle class children hope to become doctors, teacher, and lawyers. Even if they study hard, class sizes are large (50-70 students per teacher) and they only go to school for 4 hours a day. Children hope for a brighter future, but without examples from elders, their lives are not improving.



**Many children of rice farmers will drop out of school at age 12 to help on the family farm. Their parents do not understand that staying in school could help them get better paying jobs when they grow up.**



For some children, life is lived on the water.



## HALF A SCHOOL DAY

**Kids only go to school for four hours a day, which is not enough time to learn very much. Only 77% of adults in Cambodia can read and write.**

**The quality of education in Cambodia is very poor because the Khmer rouge killed all the educated people.** One school we visited had about 5 classrooms, and the kids ranged from age 5-14. They were all barefoot, even though there are parasites in the soil. We handed them books and pens. The school was cracked and lined with dirt, not nice looking, yet there were children, laughing and playing soccer, throwing balls and high fiving.

Now people are having to educate themselves if they want a higher level of education, or at least enough to get a job to support their family. They don't have many resources to do this, and they are not encouraged to do this, so many children just end up becoming poor rice farmers. The Khmer rouge killed anyone who had gone to school, who owned a business, wore glasses, or spoke a different language. This left about 1/4 of the population; all militants and simple farmers. This all happened about 40 years ago, but the country is still suffering today.



**Children at a Cambodian school were happy to be in a safe place.**

**Instead of eating potato chips as a snack, Cambodian children enjoy deep fried bugs, like crickets, silkworms, frog legs, and beetles.** Just a handful of bugs has more protein than a whole steak!

Children in Cambodia are often malnourished. Even people middle class sometimes do not have enough money to feed their families, and a handful of bugs helps them stay healthy.

## FRIED BUGS!



**Beetles taste like... crunchy bug poop!**



**With this \$25 water filter, this woman and her family will stop getting sick.**

## WATER

**Children sometimes don't have clean water.** A porous clay pot with silver mixed into the clay makes dirty water safe to drink! With the help of an organization run by monks, we provided these pots to 25 families in one rural village. They are very cheap to produce, so it's a great way to help poor communities receive clean water. Before the filters, families would get sick monthly due to dirty water.

## STILT HOMES

Rural homes are elevated on stilts. This way, in the winter when it is cooler, people stay in the house upstairs and keep warm under blankets and rugs. In the summer, they keep cool downstairs under the shade of the house, sleeping in hammocks slung between the stilts. The stilts also prevent floods from entering their houses during the high rains. People don't have rooms or beds. Instead, they sleep on mats on the floor in the countryside.



**Stilt homes are easy to build, but fragile.**



# A BOY CALLED HOPE

**Sokhem is a small four-year-old Khmer boy. His name means "hope."**

*Hope for all the things he didn't have.*

*Hope for a fully working body.*

*Hope for a community where people have enough food to eat.*

*Hope for a water filter so he doesn't get sick every month.*

*Hope for a better home — stronger than just sticks posted in the mud.*

*Hope for better quality clothes.*

*Hope for all the things he didn't have, because for a four year old, hope is something you can always have.*



Young monks walk to a monastery.

## Religion

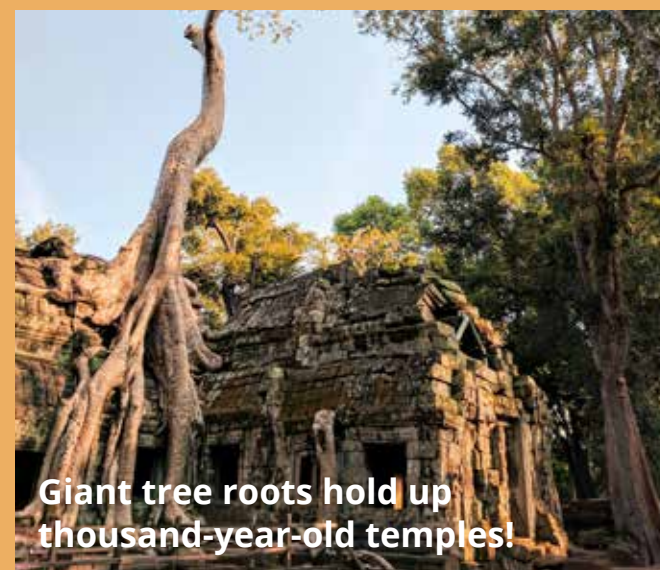
**Cambodia is a communist country and communism does not encourage religion.** Despite this, the country is 97% Buddhist.

## Temples

**A thousand years ago, Cambodians built many religious temples.** Angkor Wat, a famous Cambodian temple complex, is the largest religious monument in the world!

## Health Care

**Health care is free but it is very poor quality.** This is because everyone who was educated — including doctors — was killed by the Khmer Rouge in the civil war. The country is still recovering. Cambodians hope future generations will heal their country but it is hard without a good education system.



Giant tree roots hold up thousand-year-old temples!



A small Khmer child waves with his broken arm, held up with sticks and Velcro.



# INDIA

**We visited two homes in India.** One of the homes was in one of the poorest communities, and one was in one of the wealthiest communities. As you can probably guess, the two were very different.

The poorer home we visited was in an indigenous village where kids walked around with ragged clothes and looked malnourished. The home had a small room with a fire-lit stove, and two goats. The kitchen had enough room for a few people

and several goats. Up two stairs was another small room where their family slept on mats and ancient rugs.

The second home we visited was outside of the city in a quiet recently developed neighborhood. We had brunch with friends of friends in a modern apartment with many of the same items an American house would have, except for toilet paper. This was the family's second weekend house.

**On the way to the countryside, we stopped at a roadside restaurant. A two year old child lay on the floor of a public bathroom on a piece of cardboard.** She had flies flying around her, more than the cows on the street. Her mom was half asleep at the counter handing out paper towels. I placed a tip in her bucket and her eyes opened towards me. The little girl on the floor was sleeping and she was caked with dirt — she looked like she had never seen a shower.



## HOLY COW!

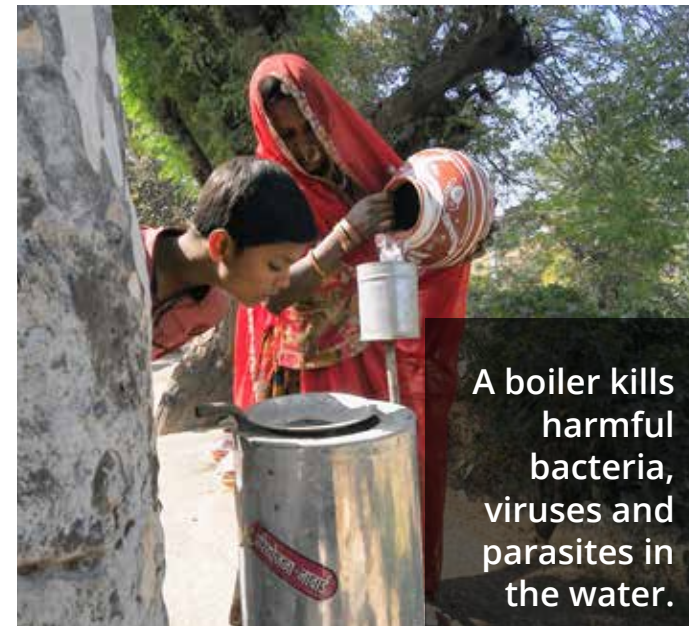
Hindus believe cows are sacred so cows freely roam the streets. When cars drive past them, they blow the flies off of their bodies. My sister and dad counted 235 cows on the road in one hour!

## FOOD

**Indian kids eat mostly vegetarian food.** Hindus don't eat beef because cows are sacred to them, and Muslims don't eat pork because it is forbidden. The religions are at ease and respect each other so neither religion eats much of either meat. Indians use many spices in their cooking because their land is very fertile to grow diverse crops. Sadly, many children in India do not have enough food to eat and are malnourished.



Indian bazaars are filled with nuts, dried fruit and spices.



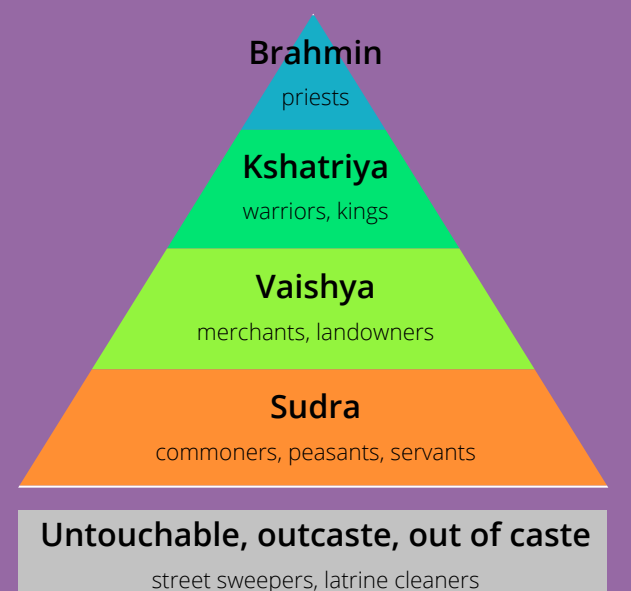
A boiler kills harmful bacteria, viruses and parasites in the water.

Me to We is a charity that provides families with clay stoves and pots to boil water. The organization spends many hours teaching mothers and children to use them every day. **Boiling drinking water helps people stay healthy.**

## WATER

## RELIGION

**In India, there use to be a strict system that ranked people based on which family they were born into.** Most families belonged to one of four main castes. People could only marry within their own caste. Some people, called Untouchables, were outcasts and could not share water or food or even touch people from higher castes. The caste system was officially abolished in 1950, although it still plays a big role in Indian culture today.







This ancient Indian pump still supplies water to their fields.

## Kumbhalgarh ● Working With a Charity

**In October, my family and I visited Me to We, a non-profit organization, and saw how they are pursuing their five goals there.** We got to meet several families and their children and we also helped build a girls' bathroom at their school.

**Me to We focuses on families who are native to the land and who are not part of mainstream culture.** They mostly focus on the mother in the family because indigenous people are often the poorest and most needy, and the women usually lead the family.

**The Me to We organization tried to focus on helping families stay together and become sustainable in their villages** instead of integrating with Western civilization, such as big cities. They started achieving this by teaching the families useful things to make everyday life easier, such as boiling water so they don't get sick every week. They taught them skills that would be helpful in their community so that they could lead a sustainable life. They also taught them how to grow more food on their land so they could sell some in the towns.

**We saw many children around in many countries.** Most of the children were smiling, but not everyone has the same things. Some children, like us, have clean water, nutritious food, doctors, schools, and opportunities. Others have much less. They speak different languages and laugh at different jokes, but they all have the same needs. They need to be healthy, and they want to learn things and accomplish things in their lives. Me to We may not have all the answers, but they provided a good outline of what people need to live a happy and healthy life.

**It's hard to think when you are hungry and hard to learn when your brain is not fed. Many children get sick from dirty water because they poop near wells and do not have the resources or habit to filter and boil their water.**

# Me to We

## Working with a local charity

In Kumbhalgarh, India I was able to see how one humanitarian group, called Me to We, is trying to help indigenous families improve their quality of life. My family and I connected with this group because I went to an elementary school involved with the Me to We program. This kind of school encourages kids to make positive changes locally and globally. At Ohlone, fourth and fifth graders organized bake sales and fund raisers to raise money that was sent to the Me to We organization.

My class was able to attend a large gathering of schools and donors for an inspirational "We Day." At "We Day", lots of children and adults gathered together to learn how to help other children around the world. Listening to those speakers tell stories about people who had so much less than me helped me realize how lucky I actually was.

At We schools, we are educated about how unfortunate some children in different parts of the world are. Although we are told and shown through videos how much less privileged some children are, nothing beats observing it in real life. This is why I think it is good and completely life changing to see other children's lives firsthand.

## Five We goals to improve communities

- 1 Clean Water and Nutritious Food**  
Helping people grow nutritious food and finding or building wells.
- 2 Shelter**  
Building homes for indigenous families.
- 3 Health Care**  
Getting access to Health Care.
- 4 Education**  
Helping children go to and stay in school.
- 5 Opportunity**  
Learning skills that can lead to good jobs and a sustainable life.



## AN INDIAN SCHOOL

**The local school in Kumbhalgarh has four classrooms for 300 students, with about 70 students in each classroom.** The walls are crumbling and they have no bathrooms — only a recently installed pit toilet.

**Me to We builds schools with help from donations, and volunteers.** They work with people in the community and check in on families to make sure their children are going to school. Me to We also provides books, pens, and uniforms for the children. When we visited, the We program was in the middle of building the school's first toilet.

**The school realized that when girls hit puberty they usually**

**dropped out of school because there was no toilet with privacy.**

Me to We started helping by just digging a hole in the ground. I helped build a foundation for a private girls' toilet. We put rock after rock and heaping spoonfuls of "masala" cement. (In India, masala is anything that is mixed. Masala tea, masala cement: mixed herbs, mixed sand)

**By helping build a bathroom for that small school, we hopefully helped the girls ages 10-14 continue to go to school to further their education.** Children in India go to school for an average of 12 years, as well as having a 63% literacy rate, but in Kumbhalgarh, the average years of school is only 6-8 years.

**In order to be healthier, stronger, and smarter people need enough nutritious food.**

Malnutrition can leave children with smaller brains and mental illnesses which make it harder to learn.

Many teachers in India often don't have much sympathy for a slow or tired child, and the child may get hit or sent out of the classroom because of something they can not control.

Today's school lunch consists of a ball of rice and a scoop of curry.



## NUTRITION

## HEALTH



These girls, ages 8-11, are half the height of an average American child.

**Many children get tapeworms, which eat the very few nutrients available to them.** Tapeworms spread because people in these villages just do their business in the fields, and when it rains, their waste gets carried by the rain water into the drinking water. Kids who drink the dirty water without boiling it get tapeworms.

## BUILDING A TOILET

**School children need bathrooms for privacy.** Many teenage girls drop out of school because they have no private place to care for their bodies. We helped build a bathroom so girls can stay in school.



We built a bathroom foundation at a school.

# Things you see in these pictures are true.

Things you see in pictures are true. They are not Photoshopped and edited or taken at exactly the right time. This is what is going on in the world. You may want to try to block it out and pretend it doesn't exist, but pictures in the media show what is happening in our world today. When I saw dirty and dusty children in Kumbhalgarh, India working and begging in the streets, tapping on the window of our van, looking so desperate. They made me realize how lucky I am to have nutritious food, clean water, a house, a great school, and many opportunities for fun extracurricular activities such as art and sports. Many children all over the world don't have these opportunities.

In Kumbhalgarh, many children sleep on the streets in the evening and beg for money in the day. They don't know anything else. They were taught to beg and hope someone with money is feeling sympathetic. This is their life. They don't have anything to compare it to.

A child in Kumbhalgarh and I could have switched places when we were born. I could be living the life they are living right now, living in a dirty smoke-filled mud shack, the place I would be supposed to call home, with an empty stomach. They could be living my life on the other side of the globe, feeling so fortunate for their great house, family and friends, and being able to go to bed every night knowing they will be safe when they wake up the next morning.



# MIDDLE EAST





# Israel

This wall separates Palestine from Israel.

## A Country Surrounded by Conflict

**Israel was created as a Jewish country because after the Holocaust many Jews were displaced and didn't have a place to live.** It is less than 100 years old! One problem Israel faces is so much conflict over Jerusalem, which is geographically located in Israel. Three major religions consider it their holy land: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

Christians and Muslims also want to own that land, but the Jews control it because it is located in Israel. Judaism isn't one of the world's main religions.

**Neighboring Arab countries don't think that Israel should exist.** Israel has a tense relationship with neighboring Arab countries Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, and

Egypt. Palestinians are Arabs who fought with Israel and lost a couple of wars, and then were forced into small strips on opposite sides of Israel, called Gaza and the West Bank. Everybody there is miserable and people are trapped. The West Bank is safer, because it is isolated and less crowded. There are also more resources on the West Bank than in Gaza but life is still difficult there.

1

Hebrew, the language the bible was written in, is Israel's national language.

2

Israel is the only Jewish country in the world.

3

Every building in Jerusalem is made of limestone, a rock made of crushed sea shells.



Standing in a pit, this butcher moves food from the floor into his oven.

## Food

**Israeli food is delicious!** It mostly consists of hummus, falafel, pita, salads, and other Mediterranean delights.

This Palestinian butcher (pictured at left) doesn't sell meat, he cooks it. People from Bethlehem prepare the meat at home before bringing it to him to cook in his ancient family oven.

## Inventions

**Israel is a very innovative country.** They invented the cherry tomato, and the long-shelf-life tomato. In Galilee, rain forest tents allow wet, tropical banana trees to grow across the street from bone-dry date palms.

Jews really value education, and because the country is primarily Jewish, Israel is a highly educated country.



Children at a school learn about hydroponic farming.

## Water

**Israel is in a desert.** Israelis have enough water because they have an ocean close by and filter the sea water to drink. Israelis invented drip irrigation — and other desert agriculture techniques — to grow crops with less water.

The Dead Sea is the lowest point on Earth — 1388 feet below sea level. The beach is covered with giant salt crystals the size of golf balls!



The Dead Sea is full of giant salt crystals!

# The Separation Barrier

**Separating two countries, two leaders, two religions.** I stand here, between them. Thick layers of powerful messages coat my body. Israeli guards hover over me, threatening to spray tear gas at anyone trying to attack.

I divide two lands. Israelis live on one side of me and Palestinians on the other. Israelis and Palestinians have been fighting over this land since 1948 when Israel was born. The Jews had wanted their own country for thousands of years, and after the Holocaust, so many Jews were displaced that it only made sense to create a Jewish country to provide homes for them. But the Palestinians never accepted Israel.

I represent division. Jewish Israelis are not allowed to travel to Palestine but Arab Israelis can pass through my gates at leisure. Palestinians are only allowed to travel to Israel if they have special visas which are very hard to get. They must maintain a completely clean record to do so. One spit or strike could mean being trapped on one side of me for the rest of their life. Over 18 years I have watched people get hurt right in front of me, thrown against me, bloody and wounded. I stand strong, unaffected, separating two countries, two leaders, two religions. I am the separation barrier.



The security wall in the West Bank of Israel divides Palestinians and Israelis

# The Bridge School

**This is the name my school has earned.** It has earned it by bridging the gap between Arab and Jewish Israelis. We learn together, play together, and paint together. When we are at school, we do not focus on our differences. We focus on our similarities. We all like to run around, play soccer, laugh with our friends, and play on the playground.

My neighbors are afraid of Arabs. They don't know how to play their games, read their words, or even talk to them. Many of my neighbors are taught to focus on the differences between the two sides, to find every small detail proving we are superior to them. Our school teaches us that we don't have to think like that. If we can combine our communities, we can have all of our differences and similarities together.

At school, we speak two languages: Hebrew and Arabic. We have a middle ground. Our school has created a safe place for us to be with Arabs. I am Jewish, and at school I am able to walk onto that bridge. I care about my Arab friends and know that they are not that different than me.

Everywhere outside our school, there is a gap separating our two cultures. This gap teaches people not to interact with the other side. At the Bridge School, this gap is filled with laughter, paint, and glue.



Jewish and Muslim children learn together at the Bridge School



**Jordan is very hot and dry, and there is an ongoing drought.** It is one of the world's most water-poor countries. One of their main environmental problems is they don't have enough natural freshwater resources. The Sea of Galilee is where all of their water comes from. Since it is on Israeli land, Israelis control the supply of water, and Jordanians are worried that Israelis might use up all of the water, cheat and measure the water incorrectly, or give themselves more.

**Lots of stories in the bible were set in Jordan.** The bible says that Moses died on a mountain in Jordan, overlooking Israel. In Jordan most people are Muslim. They consider themselves more open-minded Muslims and less conservative than other countries. People have choices about how they dress and if they pray, but social norms have pushed people in a certain direction, so most women wear hijabs, and most people pray five times a day. Muslims considered themselves to be children of Abraham, like Christians and Jews.

**The Nabateans built Petra, an ancient city carved into hidden mountains in the desert.** The Nabateans were ancient Jordanian Bedouins who controlled the spice and silk roads 2,000 years ago. Anyone who wanted to move things between Asia, Europe and Africa had to work with them. They made water reservoirs throughout the desert, which could keep you alive if you were traveling there.

1

Many of the houses are built with limestone because it is cheap and easy to find.

2

The Movie, *the Martian* was filmed in the desert of Jordan.

3

Jordan has five Syrian refugee camps, with 1.4 million Syrian refugees living there.



A lamb, almond, raisin, and rice dish is these women's favorite!

## FOOD

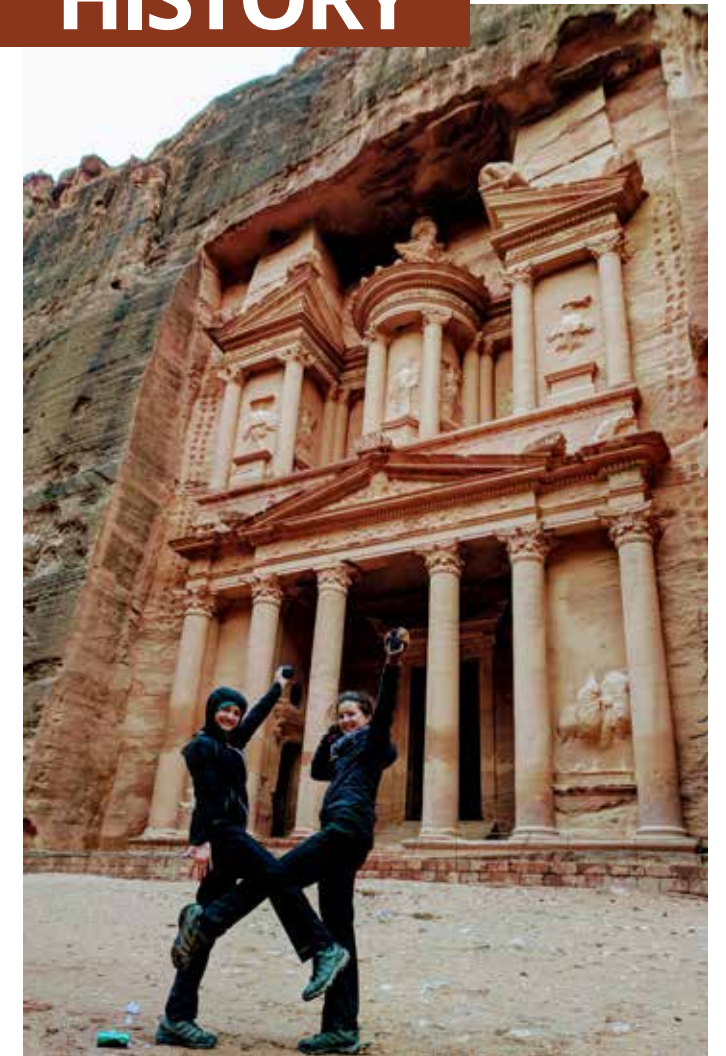
**The food in Jordan was delicious!** Kids eat healthy food for lunch at school, such as hummus, vegetables, falafel, eggplant, pita, and fruits. Their style of food is called Levantine or Middle-Eastern.



## BETWEEN THREE CONTINENTS

Petra was a secret city built by rich spice and silk traders over 2,000 years ago!

## HISTORY



Jordan is located between three continents, so if you want to travel to another continent, you will probably go through Jordan. They have been on major trade routes for a long time.

**Jordan has always been on important trade routes. Today they import more than just silk (from China) and spices (from India) — they also import education.** The King's Academy is a school in Jordan based on Deerfield Academy in Massachusetts. The King of Jordan started the school because he wanted to bring a little bit of America into his daughters' educations.

# KING FOR A DAY

**6:00 am** I wake up in my concrete walled room. I look up at my ceiling. I see the tiny fluorescent glow in the dark stars that I plastered up there when I was 6. Every time I stare at them, I think how I am one of those small stars in such a big galaxy, and I try as hard as I can to become a shooting star.

**7:00 am** My father calls me. We're late. I grab my bag and dash out the front door. Like every morning, I see children wearing rags, begging right in front of my home. I think about my room full of glowing stars, while other children sleep on the streets, waking up every hour to beg the tourists who are traveling at night.

**8:00 am** I slide into my seat just as the bell rings. My science teacher is American, and he tells us all about America. There are streams, boats, and green grass all over his country. It takes me a few moments to remind myself to think in English. At home I only speak Arabic because that is the only language my parents know, and my brain takes a second to get used to the awkward vocabulary. Alea knows five languages. Sometimes I wonder how she knows which one to pull from her brain to speak.

My teacher's voice brings me back. Today we talk about whether vaccines should be mandatory or optional. We launch an intense debate, with some of my classmates saying there should be vaccines so people don't get sick, while others consider an

individual's religious beliefs, medical problems, or philosophical beliefs. We debate until the bell rings.

In most schools kids have to be quiet and look at their teacher.

**10:30 am** We grab our morning snack: pita bread seasoned with zaatar. I shiver because it is winter, about nine degrees Celsius. I am wearing a uniform and a puffy black sweater, barely enough to keep me warm. The tips of the grass are frosted with an icy mist.

My school is full of bright green grass, more green grass than the rest of Jordan! This is a symbol of my school's wealth. My school campus looks similar to college campuses I see in American magazines. I look up at big white buildings with red trim. My school was repainted last year, when they got a large donation.

We have solar panels that provide all of the electricity for our school, and because it is usually so hot and sunny in Jordan, we are able to get all of our electricity from them. The solar panels live right outside the gate of our school.

In school, we are very isolated from cities and local people. Our classes are mainly taught in English, so it is a relief to our ears to hear our first language in class; even if it is coming out of our

strict teacher's mouth. Since Arabic is the national language of Jordan, and everybody speaks it at home with their parents, we all know it fluently. In Arabic we write from right to left.

**12:00 pm** Lunch time! When I walk into the cafeteria, I am greeted by the daily hanging fruit. Today, there are some bananas and apples hanging from a string from the ceiling. For lunch it is always buffet style. Today there is hummus, tahini, falafel, pita, and a salad bar. All of the students are very picky about their falafel. Sometimes the fried chickpea and parsley mixture is too moist or the falafel aren't quite crispy enough, but today they are perfect.

**1:30 pm** Today is early release and we have gym class last. Our gym has a cross-fit section and a pool inside, as well as three soccer fields (two turf), two basketball fields and a track outside. I swim for half of the class, and run around the track for the other half.

**2:30 pm** We see the gate every time we leave, reminding us how separated and different we are from the rest of our country. The real Jordan, where children starve every day.



Two girls at King's eat their dessert in the cafeteria



Cafeteria flags represent 37 student nationalities.





# TURKEY

## Connecting Europe and Asia

**In the news, Turkey sounds like a scary place,** but when we visited everybody seemed peaceful.

**Turkey's largest city, Istanbul, has been important for a really long time.** It was the capital of the Roman empire in the second century. King Constantine moved his capital city there when he wanted to extend the Roman Empire into Asia, and named it "Constantinople." Later the city became the capital of

the Ottoman empire, and the Ottomans renamed it an Arabic name, Istanbul.

**Istanbul is still a bustling and important place, but it is not Turkey's capital any more.** After WWI, the Ottoman empire fell apart and Turkey's new ruler Ataturk made a lot of changes in the government that encouraged Turkish people to become more Western. They switched from using the Arabic alphabet to the Latin alphabet (which is used in

Europe and the Americas). He also changed the school system and food to be more European, and separated religion and government.

**Today, Turkish people consider themselves to be European or Asian,** depending on who you ask. Nobody we talked to considered themselves to be Middle Eastern, even though the CIA World Factbook considers Turkey to be located in the Middle East.

## ISTANBUL & THE BOSPORUS

**Istanbul connects Europe and Asia, and it's on major trade routes.** It is on both sides of the Bosphorus, a narrow waterway that separates Europe and Asia. The Bosphorus connects the Mediterranean Sea to the Black Sea, and boats can sail from the Atlantic Ocean all the way to Eastern Europe by going through the Bosphorus and across the Black Sea. Governments like to be in the middle of the trade routes so they can tax people who go over their land — that's why Istanbul was a major capital city for so long. Today, it's not the capital any more, but Turkey can still charge boats a lot of money because companies would rather ship goods over water; it is 7 times cheaper than shipping them over land.

**Turkish food is similar to Greek food because Turkish and Greek people have been mingling for thousands of years.** A Turkish breakfast includes soft white cheese, fruits, honey, bread, tahini, and stuffed grape leaves. For lunch and dinner they enjoy appetizers (meze) like yogurt, onions with sumac, tomato salad, and calamari. A main dish may include grilled fish or meat kebabs.

Some kids eat American-style food, although sometimes even the simplest food has a Turkish spin on it. 'Turkish pizza' is a long skinny rectangle with a thick crust with meat, cheese, vegetables, tomato sauce and other toppings.

**A street vendor sells us *simit* bread as we drive by.**



## FOOD

**The oldest coin in the world.**

Photo credit:  
Brewbooks  
Seattle,  
USA



## AN ANCIENT WORLD

**Turkey is in the "cradle of civilization,"** a region where the first human civilizations started 15,000 years ago.

**The oldest coins in the world** — Lydia's Electrum coins from 2,700 years ago — are from Turkey.

**99.8% of people in Turkey are Muslim!** It feels less strict than Islam in Egypt and Jordan, and women actually choose whether or not to wear a head covering, and they aren't as limited by traditional values.

## RELIGION



**This 83-year-old woman has been selling flowers, soup, and tea on the same sidewalk for 40 years.**



## School in Turkey

**Emina, a Turkish 11-year-old, attends a public school that is trying to simulate a modern British or American school, but they lack many basic resources.** For example, in computer class they don't have any computers, so instead of taking the class, they use the time as a free period to play sports. For language classes, there are not enough teachers in Turkey who speak the foreign language, so Emina has to have an online tutor.

**Public schools in Turkey only have a five hour school day, so the teachers have to pack the material in, often not leaving much time for questions.** There are 30 students per teacher in public

schools.

**One private school in a Turkish beach town follows a Finnish curriculum and has two teachers for every 13 students.** There is one English speaking teacher and one Turkish speaking teacher per class, providing a bridge between both cultures and languages. Kids learn English from age 5 and are fluent by age 10. If kids in Turkey know more English, they will have more opportunities for work and college. The school has a hands-on approach, for example, using play-dough and string to solve a complicated math problem. There is a strong connection between teachers and students, almost like a family.



## I am a Syrian Refugee

**I wake up on the rocky beach and gather the plastic flower headbands** to sell before I wake my brother. He sits up quietly, not wanting to attract any more attention than is already on us. Two homeless boys with dark skin and a thick accent whose parents are not with them are always bound to catch someone's attention.

We sell in Bodrum, a small wealthy Turkish beach town, hoping to make a buck or two to buy enough food to keep hunger away. We buy our headbands from an older refugee who speaks less Turkish than we do. My brother and I learned by listening to people. We had to learn fast so we could make some money or we would have gone hungry.

When anybody asks who we are, we tell them our well-polished story. Our parents are living on the Turkish-Syrian border and have sent us to Bodrum to make some money for the family. We are on a holiday from school and our older brother takes care of us. I tell people he is 24, but my brother corrects me to say he is 26 to make him appear more real. But this is just our story.

We are Syrian refugees. We are orphans. My brother is not my brother. He is another refugee who escaped with me from our camp. It is true we lived close to the Syrian-Turkish border, just not on the Turkish side. We were able to sneak through the border before quickly hopping on a train. We took the old train most of the way through Turkey, and the last 20 miles we walked. We were barefoot with just the clothes on our back and one piece of pita for the two of us. Now we sell what we can every day. There is no such thing as a holiday for a refugee.

Today we met two American girls, wearing nice clothes with braids in their hair. Sometimes I dream about living a life like theirs. They carried a tiny green guitar that we played together for as much time as it would have taken us to walk the length of the shoreline, strumming and trying to figure out how to make nice sounds come out of it. They gave us each 10 lira, enough to buy us maybe one meal and a new pair of socks. Ours have holes everywhere. It was nice to talk to kids again. We don't feel like children anymore. We feel like invaders, trampling into another country, when really, we just want somewhere we can fit in.

# AFRICA

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# MOROCCO

## Rich in History and Flavor

**Moors are Arabs who moved to Morocco from Damascus (present day Syria) in the eighth century.** They brought the Islamic religion and the Arabic language with them and started 800 years of artistic and intellectual work. During the dark ages in Europe, Moorish cities were full of mathematicians, astronomers, inventors, philosophers, and artists. The Moors were traders and very tolerant of other people's ideas.

The rulers were Muslim, but Jews, Christians, and Berbers lived and worked with them.

The Moors developed inventions we still use today like algebra, and made a lot of progress in astronomy, surgery, vaccinations, optometry, geography, chemistry, printing, architecture, and even coffee.

**Because the Moors were traders, they were not only bringing spices and**

**silk from all over the world, but also ideas, religions and people.**

Morocco was a melting pot for religions and cultures in the time of the Moors, and it still is today. Morocco speaks four main languages: Arabic, (their national language) French, English, and Spanish. Today, the Moroccan government is not as tolerant as it used to be. It is now difficult for women to have freedom and choices that they would have in Western countries.



**Dust your oranges with some cinnamon. It's a Moroccan favorite!**

**Moroccans love bread!** They have five traditional kinds of Moroccan bread. They also eat many foods in tagines. A tagine is a kind of pot that people use a lot in Moroccan cooking. Any dish cooked in a tagine has the same name. There are many kinds of tagines, such as chicken and preserved lemons, goat and vegetables, or couscous and sweet potatoes.

## FOOD



## LEARNING

**Although education is mandatory until age 16, social norms and religion create barriers to equal and accessible education for girls.** Public schools in Morocco lack resources and still hold sexist beliefs. Girls often drop out of school because of this, making them vulnerable to early marriage and childbirth.

## HOME

**Homes in Morocco are largely influenced by ancient Moorish architecture, dating back to 711.** Mosaics were brought in by the Moors in the eighth century. The tiles form geometric patterns. Mosaics are made out of stone, glass, and ceramics. There are many tile patterns (mosaics), lining the walls of homes. Modern day Moroccans still use many variations of colors to make their homes stand out.



Photo credit: Alana Peters, Project Soar



**Project Soar's mission is to empower teenage girls in Morocco.**

# I SOAR

**I live in Morocco, in a small rural village outside of Marrakesh.** I go to school six days a week, from eight until five, with a two hour lunch break in between. In that lunch break I go home to finish as many chores as possible. Think about how many chores you do. Now multiply that by 10. That is how many chores I am expected to do daily. At school there are 50-60 students per class, so you have to be very brave to raise your hand.

**Some of my friends are pregnant.** Almost all have dropped out of school. In Morocco, the second leading cause of death for teenage girls is childbirth complications. Many times the babies are born premature, and often die within their first minutes.

**We have a home about the size of your bathroom.** We cram in up to eight people. We never get any privacy. No privacy to change. No privacy to go to the bathroom. Anything and everything we do, we have to be okay sharing it with brothers, sisters, cousins, aunts and uncles.

**Many girls in my school are married and live with their husbands, not with their families.** Although the law in Morocco is that you can't be married until age 18, the laws only work if they are enforced. One girl in my class is married to a 40-year-old man. Many girls have planned marriages, set up when they are babies or young children, often to much older men.

**I have recently found Project Soar, an organization that helps Moroccan girls like me.** I have been going there after school for about a month now. They have made a place for us to feel safe and allow us to learn how to sew, how our bodies work, how other cultures live and more. They have one requirement to participate: You have to stay in school. I have been going to school every morning with more determination than to just get by.

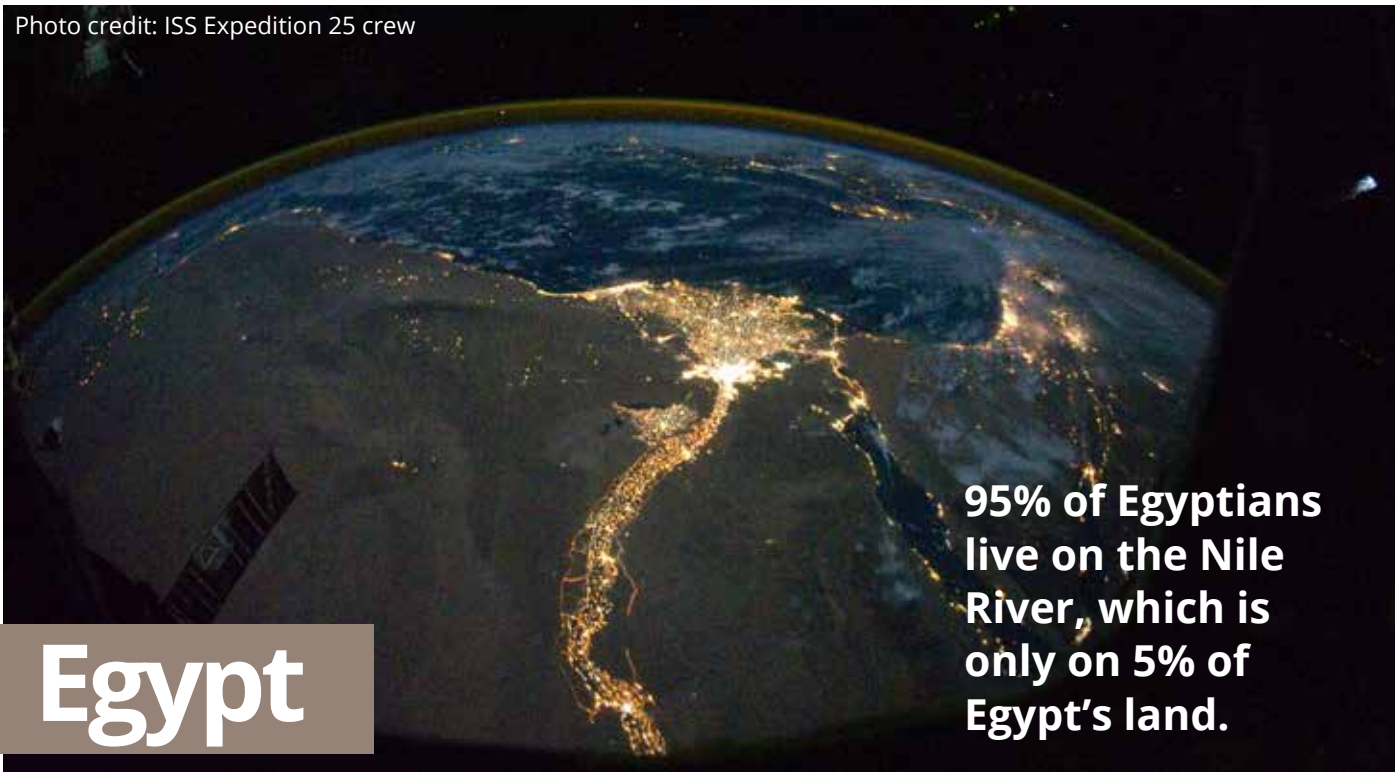
Every day we yell the five empowerment messages — *I am strong! I am smart! I am capable! I am worthy! Girl power!*



Photo credit: Heidi Roland, Project Soar



Photo credit: Natalie Opocensky, Project Soar



**95% of Egyptians live on the Nile River, which is only on 5% of Egypt's land.**

# Egypt

## River of Life

**The Nile is very important to Egyptians because without it, they would not be able to survive.** Egypt is very dry, and the Nile is their main water source for everything, from drinking water to agriculture. Ninety-five percent of people in Egypt live on the Nile River, using only five percent of Egypt's land.

**time each year — the middle of June.** The floods don't only bring in plenty of water, but they also leave a layer of rich black silt, or mud, which keeps the land fertile for agriculture. Marks on the riverside rocks showed the height of the flood each year. The marked rocks became known as 'Nileometers'.

British, built a dam called the Aswan dam. The Aswan dam controls the water, so Egypt no longer experiences droughts. The Nile no longer floods because the Aswan Dams control the floods.

Today, Ethiopia is building a dam on the Nile, thousands of kilometers upstream, so Ethiopians can survive the next drought. Egyptians are worried the Ethiopians will use too much water, and there might be less for them.

**The Nile floods arrive at almost exactly the same**

The Nile would sometimes experience droughts, so the Egyptians, with the help of the

1

The Nile is the world's longest river!

2

In 2017, the currency lost 2/3 of its value overnight!

3

Did you know garlic was found in Egyptian pyramids?

# I AM A BEDOUIN

**I am excited when I see a tourist come through our town.** They will sometimes bring books for me and my brothers and sisters. Reading books is how I learned English. I am the only one in my family who knows it. It is quite a responsibility. I am the one talking to the tourists when they come through.

I am happy to live with all of my cousins and family, but sometimes I want to find new friends of my own, outside of my small community. Sometimes I dream of going into a bustling city, shopping through the streets, buying warm pastries and shopping for new shoes. I have never seen a skyscraper.

I am lucky because we don't have to move every week. We have an oasis inside a cave that our ancestors found in the desert thousands of years ago. We do not have to be nomadic, moving our home every week, because we have water right in our backyard. Surrounding us is a sandy and rocky landscape but there is one green place, my favorite place to look at. Our oasis is a place with green shrubs, date palms and water.

I am very privileged to be Bedouin. I learn to be part of the desert. I can navigate anywhere

using the winds, sun, and stars. I see, smell, and hear noises kilometers away. I can tell you when a car is coming minutes before you will notice, and I can find an herb to ease an aching bone. I know when danger may be around, and I always stay safe.

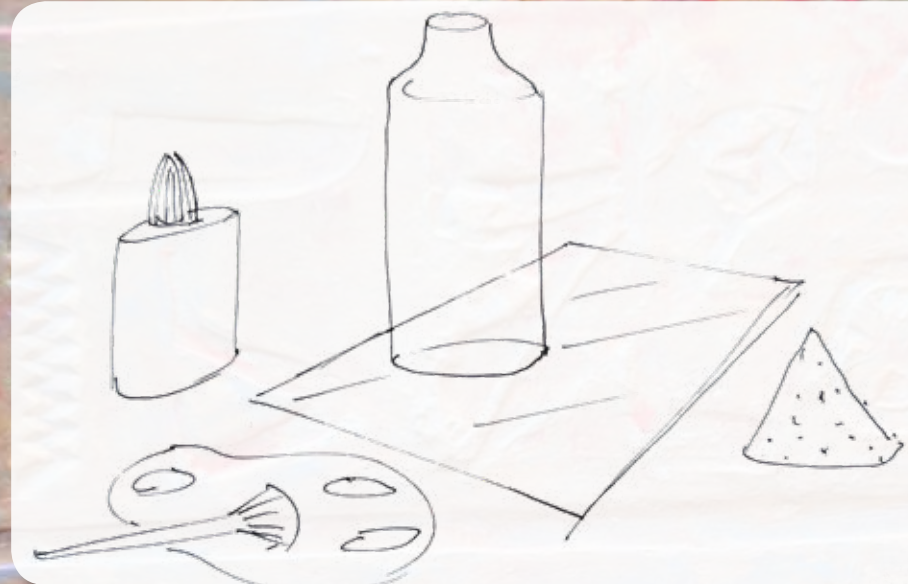
I am lucky to have an uncle who can help whenever someone gets hurt. A few days ago, my cousin got a thorn stuck in her foot. He got it out by soaking it in donkey poop. Camel poop doesn't work. After two days, it just popped out! My uncle is the smartest man I know.

We hold our traditions so tightly, as tightly as my baby sister holds our mom when she's scared. Time here stands as still as the mountains; mountains that have not moved for thousands of years. I will show you our mountains, show you our town, and show you all of the Bedouin secrets. Visit me and you will learn how to use plants for medicine, how to locate water in a desert, and how to live off the land in the desert, how to recite poetry, dance our traditional sword dance, ride camels, herd livestock, make three meals around meat and dairy from our livestock, knit tents, and so much more. When you arrive, I will show you our world.



*Our oasis is a place with green shrubs, date palms and water.*

Intestines can be pretty messy, so it's best to tidy them into a special container. The Egyptians made theirs out of clay. You can make one from a dish soap bottle.



# Make your own CANOPIC JAR

A canopic jar is where the ancient Egyptians would store the major organs in the body after someone died. This way they could mummify their bodies. We saw mummies that were 4,000 years old!

## You will need

- An empty dish soap bottle
- Paints
- Modeling clay
- Drawing paper
- Sand or pebbles
- Glue



**Duamutef** A jackal who guards the stomach



**Imsety** A man who guards the liver.



**Hapi** A baboon who guards the lungs



**Qebehsenuef** A falcon who guards the intestines

1

Take the nozzle off the dish soap bottle and rinse it out.

2

Wrap a piece of drawing paper around the bottle and cut it to fit.

3

Decorate the paper with hieroglyphics and Egyptian pictures and symbols.

4

Glue the paper to the bottle.

5

Put some sand or pebbles into the bottle to make your canopic jar stand steadily.

6

Use modeling clay to make the lid into the shape of one of the four sons of Horus (see above).



A group of kids eat boiling corn porridge for school lunch.

# Zimbabwe • Living with a Corrupt Government

**The government in Zimbabwe is corrupt** and they are stealing money from their citizens. Their currency is worthless and they have had to convert to U.S. dollars.

A long time ago, Zimbabwe borrowed a lot of money. Usually governments use borrowed money to produce materials, build factories, or create roads, but the Zimbabwean government did something different. The people who worked in the government stole the money and paid back the government's loans by printing more Zimbabwe dollar bills. They printed so much money that there were way too many Zimbabwe dollar bills floating around.

Everyone instantly "got rich," but everything was actually just the same — except things started to cost more.

**Why did things cost more?** Imagine you and all your friends suddenly started getting \$1,000 allowance per week. You would probably be willing to spend a lot more on a candy bar! The candy bar seller might raise the price of a candy bar because everyone can pay more for them. Eventually a candy bar might cost \$100. This is what happened in Zimbabwe. Everyone had so much paper money that candy bars started costing \$100 each, then \$1000 each, then \$10,000 each. Zimbabwe printed so much

extra money that people needed a Zim. \$100,000,000,000,000 bill to buy a candy bar. This is called **hyperinflation**. Now, 100 trillion Zimbabwe dollars are worth only 40 U.S. cents. Since their money no longer is worth anything, they are using USD.

**In Zimbabwe, 95% of people are unemployed!** Those 95% are in the informal economy: they are vendors, selling fruits, carved wood, and knock off items. These vendors make barely any money, enough to buy a cheap meal, and have no government support like health care and education.

“ Usually governments use borrowed money to produce materials, build factories, or create roads, but the Zimbabwean government did something different.

## Building a Bio-Digester

**We worked with a nonprofit organization** that helps poor villages in Zimbabwe. The local villagers lived in huts with mud walls and a straw roof. They put tin under the straw roofs so when it rains they don't get wet. For the kitchen they have a small brick room with a stove outside. Usually girls wake up at 4:00am to collect firewood, and by the time they get to school they are too tired to learn.

**We built a bio-digester** in the backyard of one village family, so the girls of that family would no longer have to spend their mornings

looking for firewood. A bio-digester is a huge plastic bag about 10 meters long. The family dumps their cows' manure in one end, and fertilizer and gas for cooking comes out the other end.

**How does it work?** Bacteria in the manure produces methane, a flammable gas, that fills the bag like a giant balloon. A hose attached to the bag carries the methane to their kitchen stove for a fire on command.

**Did you know:** your farts are methane too?



This giant bio-digester bag converts manure into gas for cooking.





# THIS IS MY SCHOOL

**This is my school.** My school helps children from poor families — the tuition is 10 U.S. dollars a month — too much for many families to pay.

**This is my school.** My school gives notebooks and pens to kids who cannot afford them. These travel from stores to tourists to me to the children.

**This is my school.** My school is very lucky — we are in a tourist town. We run off donations given to us by tourists visiting Victoria Falls.

**This is my school.** My school has one teacher for 50 students. These are all the teachers I can afford to hire — I am the principal and I only make \$350 a month.

**This is my school.** My school just started feeding children lunch. I can only afford to feed them a watery pounded corn mixture, but before the students would go all day without eating. Pounded corn doesn't have any protein, making it hard for the children to focus because they are tired and malnourished.

**This is my school.** My school is full of children with AIDS/HIV.

**This is my school.** My school's students only pass 30% of their tests to go into the next grade — my school is not special — all the government schools in Zimbabwe do.

**This is my school.** My school has concrete walls and a ceiling. We are lucky; other schools only have desks. Although the concrete is cracked and dry, I have those walls to thank because they hold all of the children inside the classroom.

**This is my school.** My school is full of happy children — children laughing, playing, and learning.

**This is my school.**



Two ten-year-old students show off their dance moves.

## EDUCATION

One school we visited was started by two parents in their local village who didn't want their children to have to walk five kilometers to class every morning. It has grown over time and now there are too many students who want to go there, because it is better than most of the other public schools. This is because they have used tourist donations to provide food and books for the kids.

Children at school don't have clean bathrooms or a sink to wash their hands, so they often get sick. We helped a volunteer doctor who visited a rural village to weigh the babies of the village and take their height to make sure they were growing properly and were not malnourished.



## HEALTH CARE IN ZIMBABWE



Six people share one round home.

People live in mud houses with straw roofs. Steel sheets live under the straw so people don't get wet when it rains. People prefer round homes because they are more traditional. This house had ashes on the floor because it was used as a kitchen.

## HOME



## KENYA • Living Masai

**The Masai people have clung to their ancient traditions for 600 years,** making them a large part of Kenyan culture. The Masai people love to play traditional games with sticks, bows and arrows, and uncooked beans. They also still make fires the traditional way, rubbing a stick into another, and blowing until there is smoke, before lighting a small piece of palm hair with it. They make animal traps to catch larger animals.

**The Masai people depend on their cattle.** Instead of counting their wealth in money, they count their wealth with how many cows they have. They primarily eat raw milk and raw blood from the cattle, saving the meat for special occasions. Similar to the Mongolians, they have figured out a way to bleed the cow so it doesn't die. Blood has a lot of protein and iron, two things they don't get from the milk. They believe they own all the cows in the world. Two Masai hunters told me that if

they traveled to California and went to a dairy farm, they would take their cows back. The Masai people are cow herders, and they migrate with their cows to follow the seasonal rains.

**In Masai culture, in order to become a man, a boy has to kill a lion.** The Kenyan government is trying to protect Kenyan wildlife and nature because it brings so much tourism to Kenya.



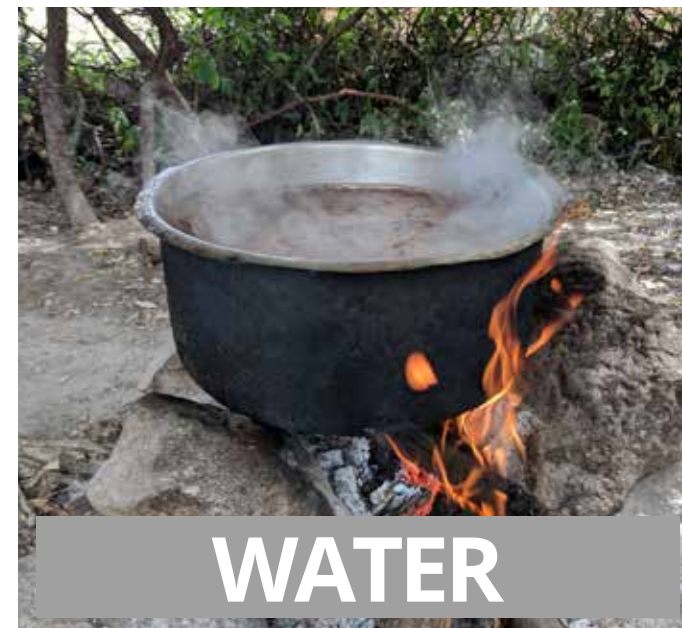
## PRIDE

Kenya is famous for its big game like lions, elephants and rhinos. Masai people help protect them because they attract tourists who help the economy.

**Watery corn porridge is their staple food.** There is barely ever enough food to satisfy their bellies. At a school we visited in the Masai village, some older students sleep there, and they eat three meals at the school. For breakfast they have a cup of hot water, for lunch they have a cup of hot corn porridge, and for dinner they have another cup of hot corn porridge-- occasionally with some beans if they can find some.



## FOOD



## WATER

**In Kenya most villages don't have clean water,** and they will often have to get water from a well. The wells are often filled with trash and dirt. The only filtration system they use is a strainer and heat. Girls and women will often walk miles to the nearest well, carrying the water on their head in a pot. Girls do this in the morning, so by the time they arrive at school they are exhausted.

**Kids looked unhealthy and malnourished.** They didn't have enough food or water, and combined with lots of labor and little sleep, they were always tired. Kids often do not have clean bathrooms or a sink to wash their hands, making them very prone to many diseases. Although their food is cooked, there is sometimes dust or dirt that flies in when it is cooking. They cook watery corn porridge in a big metal bowl over an open fire. They eat on metal plates or with a metal cup, and the dishes are not washed with soap between uses—only rinsed.



## HEALTH

**In Kenya's remote eastern Savannah, sixth graders are learning the same math as we learn in the USA, and they are also learning English.** Their school is very poor, but the children have skilled and dedicated teachers. Kids are trying to learn enough to attend competitive universities in the capital city, Nairobi.

# My School

Story of a Kenyan Masai Girl.

## My school has a lot of needs.

We need a toilet. Right now there are only four toilets for the teachers to share with the kids. The other 4, originally for the kids, have sunk back into the soil because the holes dug below the porcelain seats have already filled up with our waste. Before the walls were made of dirt, so the holes caved in when the workers came to our school to try to pump it out. One of the workers was my uncle. He comes every day to build a new one, one made out of reinforced concrete.

We need water tanks. Right now we have to rely on the hotels to bring us water. The hotels need us to protect the big animals so tourists will keep coming. A couple of them are sponsoring our school so that we will grow up to be conservationists, tour guides, and teachers to educate our children.

We need a fence, so wild animals like elephants and lions don't get in. It's hard to learn when an elephant or lion is meters away, threatening to attack.

We need a school bus. At least once a week we cannot make it up our road to school because elephants block our path. People from the west talk about how elephants are going extinct, but I see them everywhere. They are huge and strong and will attack if they feel threatened.

We need an administration block. Right now our

principal is in a small brick room, with one small desk holding all of our supplies. Supplies are donated by tourists who visit us with a look of sympathy across their faces. We don't know what they are comparing us to.

We need a lighting system. We don't have any electricity. I am one of the forty kids who sleep at the school because when I went home, I would not be able to come back to school. At night, we have to stay in our beds.

***It's hard to learn when an elephant or lion is meters away, threatening to attack.***

We need four new dormitories. We have a bunk room with tin walls and dirt floors for the girls. The wall says: maximum two people. Twenty eight girls fit in that room, including me. We have six bunk beds. Each layer of the bunk bed sleeps two to three children. We used to sleep on a concrete floor but kids kept getting pneumonia so a hotel bought us the uncomfortable wiry iron beds.

We need food. We get three meals a day, but not enough protein and nutrients. A cup of tea for breakfast, a half a cup of plain corn porridge for lunch, and more corn porridge and beans for dinner.

We need time to study. We spend every moment of every day studying for the high school exam, the same exam that students are taking in Nairobi. Kids in Nairobi have more resources than us, like hardbound books and pencils. Many girls here have to miss school because we are in charge of domestic work in the house. We do most of the household chores. "Why?" you may ask. Because we are girls. The boys look after the cattle, but they can study while they watch the cattle. We girls do not have that privilege; we have very active work. We, the lucky 28 older girls get to sleep at school so we can study without being

bothered by housework. I am lucky, but it is not enough.

We need housing for teachers. Our teachers sleep at school with us. They invited me to stay at the school because I was not able to study at home. Masai girls always have too much work. We must milk the cows, walk far to the watering hole to do laundry and get water, and gather firewood. Also, I am expected to marry this year so I will soon be pregnant with my first child. My mother and father don't understand why I am here. It's not common for a girl my age to be at school. My uncle is the head of the family, and since I am the eldest and have no brothers, he has convinced my parents that they should let me attend school so I can become a teacher or work in tourism and care for them when they are older.

**We have so many needs, but we also have so much.**

We have teachers. They are all volunteers and schedule their life around us and our school. They are kind, dedicated and smart.

We have a principal. He continues to run our school, even though he eats the same things we eat. He has the same bathroom as us. He sleeps with his wife and newborn baby on a mattress on the floor of his office.

We have friends in the hotels who bring tourists to us. They donate money and tell us that they care.

We have older siblings who traveled out of our vast grasslands to study in the city and then came back home. We aspire to be like them one day.

We have friends who laugh with us.

We have family who love us.

If you were me, would you begin with what you need and end with what you have? Or would you do it the other way around?



# SOUTH AFRICA

## Race and Poverty

**In South Africa, there is a huge contrast between rich and poor** people, and they are living just across the road from each other. Many of the rich are white South African and many of the poor are black South Africans. The two main cities in South Africa, Cape Town and Johannesburg, are very different. Johannesburg is poorer with more evident crime and racism. Many police are illiterate and instead of enforcing laws they ask for money and slip it in their pockets after they pull someone over. They call it "making a plan." Cape Town is wealthier and has more European influences.

**Apartheid** was a system in South Africa that was started after World War II by white Dutch men. They controlled black South Africans, sometimes getting very violent. Under Apartheid, black and white people were not equal to each other. For example, black people were not allowed to vote or own land in white areas. When black people tried to speak up or protest, they were put in jail, tortured, or even killed. This happened to thousands of school children in Soweto who marched in the streets to protest apartheid in 1976. Hundreds were shot to death by police for complaining about oppressive

laws in their schools.

Apartheid ended in 1991, although it left some traces behind. Today, life in South Africa is not as violent, but people still assault each other on the streets. Now there are black people in the government, but, still today, whites are richer than blacks and racism is a big problem. For example, our tour guide told us that someone called him a monkey while he was driving to work the week before. It was a cruel and racist thing to say and it proves many people have not totally gotten over apartheid.

1

27.6% of people are unemployed.

2

South Africa has the highest rate of rape and AIDS in the world.

3

Table Mountain, in Cape Town, is 6 times older than the Himalayas.

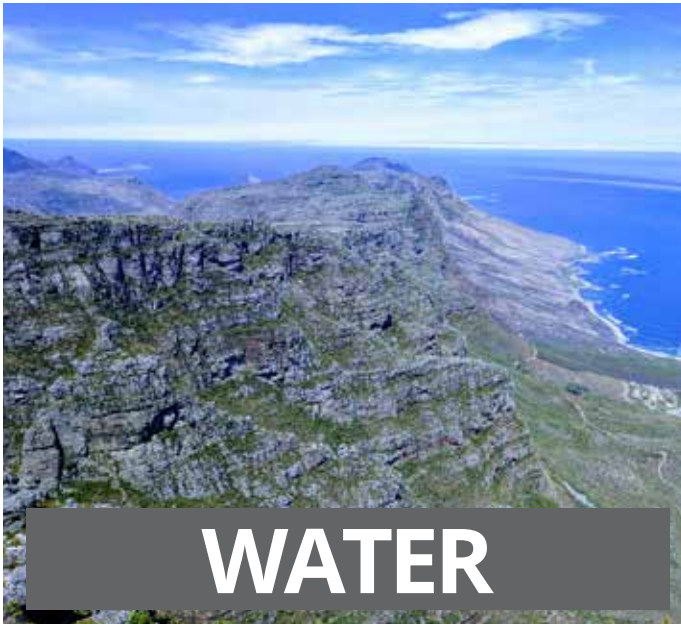
**Children eat pounded corn with water** for their main source of energy. If they are really lucky, they will get a little meat or vegetables with it. There is not usually enough food for a whole family, so children often only eat two meals a day of plain corn.

**Girls work hard to cook the food.** They pound raw dried corn until it is a powder before mixing it with water into a paste. Then they cook it over a low fire in a tin pot until it is even thicker. Instead of using yellow corn as we do in America, kids in Africa eat white corn.

## FOOD



A woman pounds dry corn to make polenta.



## WATER

**Cape Town, a large city in South Africa, is in a severe drought right now.** The government didn't plan well for the drought. They didn't create sources to save water before it was too late. Now they are trying to pump water out of the dry ground. Cape Town has the most severe drought in the world right now!

## HOME

**Homes in the slums were tin shacks, cramming in 6 people into a space, about as small as two dog houses.** The biggest worry in the slums is something catching on fire and burning down all of the neighboring shacks. The shacks are often made of recycling that they find in the garbage.



Boys return home to the slums of Soweto after school.

# Living Below The Line

**Poverty.** This is what I live in.

Poverty line. This is what I live below.

Someone once asked me, "What is Soweto?"

Soweto is sharing a port-a-potty with 200 other people.

Soweto is getting up in the morning before the sun rises, on a stained mattress and filthy blankets and knowing I have to work. I fetch water for my brothers and sisters to bathe. I fetch water for us to drink.

Soweto is a smell of urine, blood and filth. My baby sister wets her bed every night. The cloth diaper I made for her isn't enough.

Soweto is being tired before I arrive at school. Every morning I fetch water for my family, wake up my siblings, and feed and dress us all. I have no energy by the time I get to school. I sleep during class, because like all the other girls, I spend all night laying awake, protecting my

body and few belongings. Our bodies do not belong to us. Our bodies belong to older men. Men who have more money than we do. These men come with the promise of an iPhone or money, in return for our bodies. Many girls in my class are pregnant. Some have children as old as three. We are in grade nine.

Soweto is watching my younger sisters go to school, hoping they will not be faced with the same challenges as every other girl in our community but knowing they will. I hope when they go to school they learn. I watch my brothers go to school. I hope they will not turn into the older men in our community but I realize they will become like every other black man. Enslaved by alcohol and drugs.

Soweto is taking turns with my mother on cold nights, tending my fire and others. If something catches fire, all of our few belongings will go with it. We'll take the rest of our village with us because only a tin wall and palm hair separate my family's room from our neighbors' on all sides.

Soweto requires a lot of hope. Hoping is something everyone can do, no matter how much money you have. I hope for many things. I hope one day blacks will be equal to whites in South Africa. We have laws to support equality, but people's hearts and minds are still catching up. Yesterday a white boy called me a monkey. I hope our community shapes itself up, people can get jobs, and people will not live off of recycling and food scraps. I collect food scraps from under the tables where white people sit. I collect them the same way the dogs do. The only difference is the dogs get their food scraps in a bowl.

I hope for a job. I don't want to follow in my mother's footsteps. I want to follow in the footsteps of a life worth passing on and remembering. I hope for education. A good education. Not the free one the government is so proud to provide — one tired teacher for 70 students is not going to teach us enough to get a job.

I hope for an education to teach me how to live outside of this township. I hope to become a lawyer. I hope to fight for others, who cannot

fight for themselves. I will not charge any money. I will help communities like mine.

I hope for a stable government. Not a corrupt one. For a president who is literate. For police who do their jobs, not for ones who ask for money to go in their pockets.

My family does not live only with sadness. We find fun things to keep us occupied. We play hopscotch with sticks from the trees. We laugh and enjoy each other's company.

We watch others who have the same things as us feeling depressed day after day. You don't need money to live a rich life. Friends and family always are right by your side. Money is not.

Soweto is the place I live. Where do you live? Imagine yourself living in my life. Can you picture it? Would you lose hope? Or would you keep hope and try as hard as you can to hold onto it?

**AIDS/HIV is a disease caused by a virus that is spread by body fluids. South Africa has the highest rate of AIDS/HIV in the world, with 7.1 million people living with the disease.** South Africa's average life expectancy plunged to less than 43 years in 2008 because of this, though it has gone back up to 63 years in 2017. Young women in South Africa, especially ones in poverty, are vulnerable to the disease because so many of them are likely to be raped.

# SOUTH AMERICA

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PERU - 92



**Machu Picchu may have been a secret university for the ancient Incans.**

## An Amazing School

**The Quechua (indigenous Peruvians) were enslaved by Spanish colonists until 1969 — only 49 years ago.**

Many of them are still poor today. A Dutch woman visited Peru and was upset by the living conditions of poor children there. She decided to do something to help. She began by adopting children she saw on the street one by one. By the time she had adopted 18 kids, she decided she needed to do something else to help.

She opened a school with just her children as students, and as more and more people heard about it, it kept on growing. She told people in the Netherlands about what she was doing and received some donations.

Now the school has been running for many years, and they have a medical facility, a cafeteria, and many classrooms for their 160 students. A hotel right next door helps raise money for the school.

# Peru

## Life in the Mountains

**Before the Spanish took over in 1530, there was the Incan empire and civilization in Peru.**

The Quechua people of the Incan empire were expert farmers and builders who created over 20,000 miles of stone trails in the Andes.

We still hike on those same trails today! On Machu Picchu, a sundial and an astronomical observatory show that Incans used math and science. Astronomers and scientists kept mathematical records with a form of writing that used knotted ropes called **quipus** and no one knows how to read them any more.

The Spanish conquerors were very opposed to ideas that didn't fit into the Catholic religion, such as science, math, and many Incan traditions. They killed all the Incan intellectuals, so much of the information we know today is educated guesses.

1

Machu Picchu means old mountain in Quechua.

2

Indiana Jones is based on the discoverer of Machu Picchu.

3

Kids dress in traditional clothes made out of llama wool.

## Mountain Climates

**Peru is in the tropics where it rains a lot, so Peruvians have plenty of fresh water to drink. Very high mountains called the Andes reach nearly 23,000 feet high — almost as high as the Himalayas. It gets colder higher up, so Peruvians have many ecosystems ranging from hot, wet tropics, to dry, cold mountain farmlands.**



Students are very lucky because they are able to eat healthy food and learn from great teachers every day.



## Salt Ponds

**The Andes mountains in Peru were formed by tectonic plates 70 million years ago.** As the mountains rose from the ocean, massive lakes of salty water became trapped between the mountains. Over thousands of years, the water evaporated and only the salt was left. After many natural disasters, the mountains caved in and the salt deposit was buried.

**Today, salty water rises up to the surface where local farmers direct it to shallow salt ponds dug out of the mud.** After filling the ponds the water in them is left to evaporate, leaving just the salt behind. Farmers harvest the dried salt by scraping off layers. The first layer that is in contact with the sun is clean, so it is used as table salt. The rest of the salt

is dirty and it is sold to cattle farmers whose cattle use it as a salt lick.

**Did you know the word *salary* comes from *salt*? Roman soldiers were paid with salt, and it was as valuable as gold back then because it was used to preserve meat.**

## FREEZE-DRIED POTATOES

**Peru has a dry season and a wet season. During the wet season potatoes are grown.** During the dry season farmers put a portion of the potatoes aside. They lay their potatoes on top of a cold mountain to freeze. In the morning when the potatoes begin to thaw, the farmers stomp on them with bare feet to squeeze the water out. They do this every night for two or three weeks until no more water comes out. They can store these dry potatoes for hundreds of years and they won't spoil! The Quechua people boil these potatoes in the dry season to always have food. This process, called natural freeze-drying, is the same method the ancient Incans used as a way to store potatoes!

This potato lasts hundreds of years!



**The Quechua people discovered a sinkhole that was around 100 feet deep!** In 1100 AD, the Quechua built 20 terraces, an irrigation system, and an underground drainage canal in the sinkhole. The temperature rises 59 degrees from top to bottom. This is the same temperature found at sea level, even though it is up at 12,000 feet elevation. Over hundreds of years, Incans acclimated crops to grow at different levels of this sinkhole. Corn, only grown at sea level, was adapted to grow in the mountains. Potatoes only grew in the mountains, but were acclimated to grow at sea level.

## EXPERIMENTAL FARMING



## COCA-COLA

**Coca Cola was invented in Peru!** In 1875, a Peruvian man sold it to Kessler, an American from Atlanta. He sold it under two conditions: It had to have "coca" in the name because it was made from the coca plant, the same plant used to make cocaine. It also had to have red and white on the label because those are the colors of the Peruvian flag.

## FOOD

**Peruvians first discovered potatoes in the high Andes.** Now they have 4,000 different varieties of potatoes, although only six of the varieties are popular.

**Peru is the largest quinoa exporter in the world!** When quinoa grows it is bright rainbow colors, and it looks like paint bombs hit the crops.







# Colombia

A Mostly Peaceful Place

**In Colombia, people eat coconut rice, grilled or fried fish, and fried plantains. We visited a fishing village where a local man showed us the process for catching the fish, and his wife showed us how to cook them.**

**Fernando begins by weaving the fishing net on one single stick, kind of like knitting, but looser.** Once he has a huge circle of netting, he adds lead bulbs to the edges of the fishing net to weigh it down.

Fernando takes a rickety wooden boat out to the mangrove waters which is only a few feet deep, and once he is far enough from shore, he steps into the mucky water. He whirles the net above his head like a lasso and flings it into the water. After a few seconds he pulls the rope back, catching about 30 fish. He pulls the flopping fish out of the net one-by-one making sure not to get scraped by their spiky backbones. He throws them into a big bucket

and watches them die. This is his lifestyle, and his main source of food.

Fernando brings the fish back on the boat to his outdoor kitchen and lays them on the big wooden slab by the ocean. After pulling the guts and intestines out with his hands, he gently scrapes off the scales with a wooden board studded with sharp nails.

His wife Carolina waits expectantly. She grills half of the fish on a wire rack over hot embers. She fries the other half in a huge pot of oil. While she is frying the fish, she throws in some cut up plantains.

**She makes coconut milk fresh, first by grating the skin of an old coconut**

**with a makeshift grater made out of a slab of aluminum with holes punched through.** Carolina adds the coconut water back to the grated coconut meat, and squeezes the flavor out about 10 times. Then she pours this mixture over the fish before adding some onions, garlic, peppers, lime, salt and a few chillies.

She melts brown sugar in a pot over high heat and then adds a second pressing of coconut milk and soaked rice to it. She covers the pot, and places it above a low wood-burning fire.

Once cooked, Carolina puts these delicious dishes on big plastic plates for us, the tourists who visited her in her village.

## Community Parenting

All of the women in La Boquilla are considered to be the mothers of every village child. The women scold together, discipline together, and reward together. Every child always has a place to be safe. Everybody trusts one another, and the community is very tightly knit.

La Boquilla was settled by slaves in the 1500's. Even today, the government is trying to take their land away to build hotels by the water. This town uses their strong community to fight for freedom and rights.

## Another Bomb

Juan's childhood story from the 1980's

*I wake up. Another bomb has exploded.*

*This time it breaks my windows.*

*It is only next door. My neighbors are dead.*

*The bomb came in an ice cream cart. Those carts are what used to make me so happy coming home from school every day.*

*I have to leave tomorrow. My mom says we are moving to Cartagena where it is safer.*

**Colombia is the highest cocaine producing country in the world.**

When our guide was ten-years-old his morning routine was

interrupted by a bomb that shattered his window. He told us it was the third bomb he witnessed before turning 11. He watched his neighbor blow up and die right in front of him.

In the 1970-80's drug factories in the jungles of Colombia produced cocaine, an illegal drug sold on the streets of the United States. The drug dealers who ran these businesses were very violent and they kidnapped and killed people who were against them.

Bogotá, the capital of Colombia, was a very dangerous place because drug dealers were attacking politicians who lived there. Many bombs went off in innocent people's apartment buildings.



An ice cream cart changed Fernando's life.



Teen moms must stay in school to attend Juanfe. In return, they learn about one of three career paths: cooking, beauty or hotel management.

# A TEEN MOTHER'S STORY

The Juanfe Foundation gives teen mothers a second chance at finishing their education and finding a career path. Girls who attend the program live in poverty, and most have very sad childhood stories. Juanfe gives them skills and hope.

"Carolina!" My mother cried. But she was too late. She would always say, "If you become pregnant as a teen, there is no hope." My mom is 13 years older than me. Her mom is 12 years older than her. This has been going on in my family for generations. She wanted me to break that cycle so badly and I failed her.

I have a baby in my stomach. It is not uncommon where I live. At least three times an hour somebody in my country is sexually abused.

I have to live with the man who raped me. The uncle who used to swing me around when I was little. The uncle who used to play on the beach with me. The uncle who used to playfully wrestle me to the ground. Now he wrestled me to the ground, but not so playfully.

This was almost a year ago.

My community pushed me as far out of their lives as possible, not wanting to be near me, a so-called disease. I heard people snicker as they walked by me. My mother tried to protect me.

I memorized every loose thread on the worn-down shoes that I looked down at many times a day. Every thread would remind me, 'There is no hope'

I didn't think I would ever go back to school.

After Ana was born, I didn't know what to do. I didn't know how I would stay in school or how I would take care of my baby. I lost all hope.

I heard about the Juanfe Foundation, a place that helps girls like me break the cycle of teen pregnancy and poverty. They have rules: I can't get pregnant while I am in the program, I have to use birth control, and I can only go because I am so poor. More than a third of us live below the poverty line. They educate Colombian girls like me, keeping our babies in a nursery nearby to play, eat, and sleep. I decided to try it out.

They help us continue our education and find a job in one of three career paths they provide: cooking, hotel management, and beauty. I chose cooking, something I have loved since I was little. At home, I cook flaky fish on our makeshift grill, coconut rice in a big wok sitting on top of a fire, and crispy fried plantains; these are the most typical Colombian foods. The foundation provides me with food, baby care, health care, transportation, and education. And one day, as I was frying under-ripe plantains, and my teacher applauded me, I saw a small glimmer of hope.

If you lose all hope and have no fight in you, you will not move forward. I hold my head higher, so that my daughter will have a better life.

# You Can Help!

It feels great to help people who need it, especially children, and for those who don't have much, even something small can make a big difference.

We helped families in almost every country we visited, and while working with them we were able to learn how children live their day-to-day lives. With each project we tried to make the biggest difference in a family's life, from building a foundation for a bathroom at an Indian school, to putting together a bio-digester for a Zimbabwean family. We donated art and writing supplies to almost all of the schools we visited, because even a pencil may be too expensive for a family to afford.

Everyone we met had different challenges. Some kids already had babies of their own. Some didn't

have any clean water at home. For \$25, we bought a clay water filter so Cambodian children wouldn't get sick from dirty water every month. That's 5 morning coffees we gave up, and a whole family that isn't getting sick any more.

Many kids we visited will never travel in their lives, so I shared stories with them to paint the most vivid and detailed description of what life is like in the USA. In return many of them shared stories with me about their lives, and many stories in this book are based off of what those kids told me. Follow the page numbers below to read them!

You can help too! Pick an organization below. There is a link to their website where you can donate or learn other ways to help. Even a week's worth of allowance can make a big difference.



## Project Soar

[www.projectsoarmorocco.org/](http://www.projectsoarmorocco.org/)

Project Soar's goal for every **Moroccan** teenage girl to know her value, voice, body, rights, and path. They provide 50 lessons of empowerment to keep Moroccan girls in school and prepare them for a more productive future. Only girls who stay in school can participate in Project Soar.



## Jafuta (Biogas)

[www.jafutafoundation.org/](http://www.jafutafoundation.org/)

In **Zimbabwe**, many families have to spend hours a day collecting firewood to cook food.

We worked with an organization that builds Bio-Digesters in villagers yard that will turn their cows poop into gas for a fire. It not only solves the excessive cow manure problem, but also gives them a fire on command.



## JuanFe Foundation

[juanfe.org/](http://juanfe.org/)

The JuanFe Foundation helps pregnant teens and girls with young babies in **Colombia**, a place where teen pregnancy is way too common. They create a safe place for these mothers and their babies, while helping the teens continue their education and find a career path in cooking, beauty or the hotel industry.



## Me to We

[www.wecharity.org](http://www.wecharity.org)

This organization helps indigenous families get health care, food, education, shelter, and water. They are able to do this with donations and volunteer work. I went to a "We" elementary school who partnered with Me to We. They work in many developing countries, but we worked with them in **India**.



## CBAVC

[www.cbavc.org](http://www.cbavc.org)

This **Cambodian** Buddhism Association for Vulnerable Children provides Cambodian families with clay water filters. People in this community often get sick from dirty water.

For only \$25 a whole family has enough clean water to drink for at least 10 years.



# References

**A Life Like Mine** (DK, Unicef: 2005) helped inspire this book to come together. When I was little, I read it hundreds of times, always calling it “the hat book.” Every time I read it, I would try to find as many hats in the book as possible. Similar to this book, [A Life Like Mine](#) shows what kids’ lives are like in many different countries around the world.

I used **The World Factbook** for statistics and information on every country in this book. As soon as my family and I arrived in a new country, we went over The World Factbook for that country and found out information about what was different about that country. The World Factbook is a great online source if you are interested on going deeper into a country and its background, current statistics and history. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>

The **UN Sustainable Development Goals** were a great resource I looked back on when I wanted to understand high level statistics about the world as a whole. We visited the United Nations Office in Geneva, Switzerland, and there I was wowed by the crazy statistics posted on the walls, for example, Over one third of the world’s food is

wasted, and Over 836 million people live in extreme poverty. <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>

**UNICEF** is a branch of the UN that works in 190 countries helping children. Something special about UNICEF is that they not only help millions of children, but also collect amazing facts and statistics while they work. On UNICEF’s website, you can see pages on malnutrition or inequality in wealthy countries. On Halloween, we always carry a little box to raise money for UNICEF, and help some of the many causes they aid. <https://www.unicef.org/>

**The World Health Organization** is a branch of the UN, and they help people in 194 countries across the world. The WHO provides medicine for those in need and assists them in leading healthier lifestyles. In Geneva, Switzerland we saw posters about health all over the world, and I still remember many of the sad statistics. <http://www.who.int/countries/en/>

**The Learner’s Dictionary** has good, simple definitions of complicated words. <http://learnersdictionary.com/>

# Glossary

**Agriculture:** The science or occupation of farming

**Ancient:** Very old

**Arab:** A member of the people who are originally from the Arabian Peninsula and who now live mostly in the Middle East and northern Africa

**Architecture:** The art or science of designing and creating buildings

**Capitalism:** A way of organizing an economy that says people, not the government, should control capital (money and resources). It proposes that if people work harder, they can receive more

**Ceramics:** The art of making things out of clay

**Childbirth:** The act or process of giving birth to children

**Civilization:** An urban place where people have settled

**Colonist:** A settler of a colony

**Communism:** A government and way of organizing an economy where the government owns everything and distributes resources like food and housing to the people

**Culture:** The beliefs, customs, and arts of a particular society, group, place, or time

**Democracy:** A government in which the citizens choose, through elections, the politicians who run their country

**Developed country:** A country that is economically and socially advanced

**Developing country:** A poor agricultural country that is seeking to become more advanced economically and socially

**Economy:** A system by which goods and services are produced, sold, and bought in a country or region

**Elders:** Older people, usually used to describe people who are members of the same family

**Emigrate:** To leave your own country to move to another country

**Empire:** A group of states or countries under a single supreme authority

**Enforced:** To make sure that people do what is required by a law, rule, etc.

**Export:** Send goods or services to another country for sale

**Fertile:** Able to support the growth of many plants

**Foreign:** Being in a country that is not one’s own

**Ger:** A round Mongolian home

**Glaciers:** Big mountains of ice that stay frozen year-round

**Government:** The group of people who control and make decisions for a country, state, etc.

**Gross Domestic Product (GDP):** The total value of goods produced and services provided in a country during one year

**Gross National Happiness:** A measurement of how happy people are, started by the Bhutanese government in response to GDP

**Himalayas:** A mountain range in northern India, southern Tibet, Nepal, and Bhutan. The Himalayas include nine of the world’s ten highest peaks, including Mount Everest

**Hyperinflation:** When the value of money drops and the price of goods skyrocket. (See page 78 for more information)

**Immigrate:** Move in to another country to live permanently

**Import:** Bring goods or services from abroad for sale

**Indigenous:** Somebody who is native to a place

**Influence:** The power to cause changes without directly forcing them to happen

**Innovative:** Having new ideas about how something can be done

**Irrigation:** To supply land with water by using artificial means such as pipes

**Limestone:** A type of white stone that is commonly used in building

**Malnutrition:** The unhealthy condition that results from not eating enough food or not eating enough healthy food; poor nutrition

**Mandatory:** Something required by law

**Mangrove:** A tropical tree that has roots which grow from its branches and that grows in swamps or shallow salt water

**Maori:** Indigenous New Zealanders

**Masai:** Indigenous cattle herders from Kenya and Tanzania

**Meter:** A measure of length; about the same length as a yard

**Militants:** Having or showing a desire or willingness to use strong, extreme, and sometimes forceful methods to achieve something

**Monastery:** A building where monks live

**Monk:** a male member of a religious community

**Mosaic:** A decoration on a surface made by arranging small pieces of colored glass or stone to make pictures or patterns

**Nomad:** Somebody who moves their home constantly or seasonally

**Nun:** a female member of a religious community

**Nutrients:** Parts of food that nourish the body

**Nutritious:** Having substances that a person or animal needs to be healthy and grow properly

**Parasites:** An animal or plant that lives in or on another animal or plant and gets food or protection from it

**Pneumonia:** Lung inflammation caused by an infection

**Politics:** Activities related to governing a country or area, especially among people hoping to achieve power

**Poor:** Not having enough money for the basic things that people need to live properly

**Porous:** Having small holes that allow air or liquid to pass through

**Prayer flag:** Flags that Bhutanese and Tibetan people believe spread prayers through the mountains

**Premature:** Happening too soon

**Quechua:** Indigenous Peruvian

**Racism:** Discrimination towards a different race based on the belief that one’s race is superior

**Rank:** A position in a society, organization or group

**Refugee:** Someone who has been forced to leave a country because of war or for religious or political reasons

**Resource:** A supply of something (such as money, or fuel, or food, or workers) that someone has and can use when it is needed

**Rural:** Relating to the country and the people who live there instead of the city

**Sacred:** Very holy

**Silk Road:** Ancient trade route from China to the Mediterranean Sea

**Spice Road:** Ancient trade route from India to the Mediterranean Sea

**Sustainable:** Able to be used without being completely used up or destroyed

**Tagine:** A Moroccan clay pot with a cone-shaped lid that is used to roast or steam food

**Urban:** Relating to cities and the people who live in them

**Vulnerable:** Easily hurt or harmed physically, mentally, or emotionally

**Wealthy:** Having a lot of money and possessions