

Better Life for Girls through GCED: Unheard Stories of Our Girls 1

# Striving for Better Life through Education





Asia-Pacific Centre of Education for International Understanding (APCEIU)

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The 'Better Life for Girls through GCED' series is the outcome of the GCED Project (Book-making), a segment of UNESCO/KOICA Joint Fellowship Programme 2016. 25 educators from Africa and the Asia have shared their ideas, reflections, hopes and aspirations through the stories of their girls by writing and drawing under the theme of 'Unheard Stories of Our Girls.'

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**Striving for Better Life through Education**

Coordinated and Edited by  
Office of Education and Training, APCEIU

Writings and Illustrations by  
Participants of UNESCO/KOICA Joint Fellowship Programme 2016

Designed by  
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Under the auspices of UNESCO

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Better Life for Girls through GCED:  
Unheard Stories of Our Girls 1

# Striving for Better Life through Education

Fatimé Koutou (Chad)

Kanyange Marie-Ange (Burundi)

Vongsonhe Heuangphida (Laos)

Tienin Bélibi René (Burkina Faso)

Souleymane Gniné Diarra (Mali)

Miftah Mlinde Ahmed (Comoros)

Mouhamath Ndiaye (Senegal)

Raphael Banda (Zambia)

Dossèh Akassi (Togo)

Sushil Babu Khanal (Nepal)

Niwamanya Gilbert (Uganda)

Christopher J Magomelo (Malawi)

Yesel Zangpo (Bhutan)



# Better Life for Girls through GCED: Unheard Stories of Our Girls 1

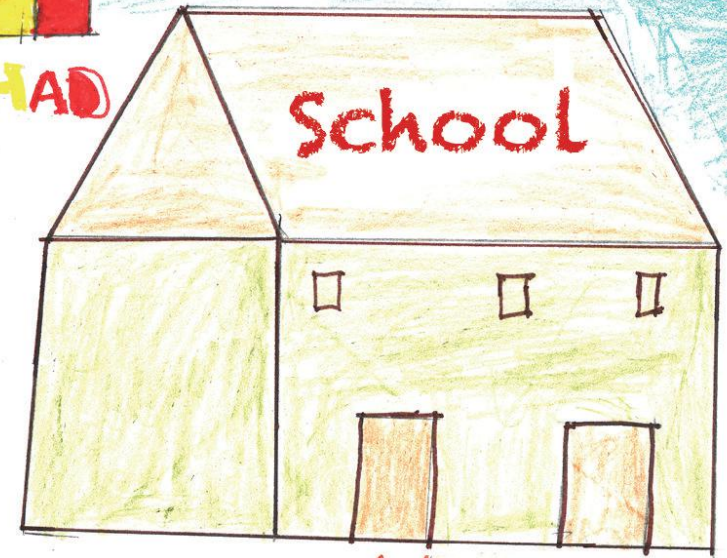


The “Better Life for Girls through GCED: Unheard Stories of Our Girls” series depict stories of girls from different parts of the world. Coming from Africa and Asia, 25 educators have written stories about their girls in neighbor to share with readers all over the world. As the title implies, this is a book about real people living on the fringes of society. The 25 educators have collected the stories from their girls in neighbor especially who are having challenges on their way to access quality education. Their journeys have been often filled with challenges and

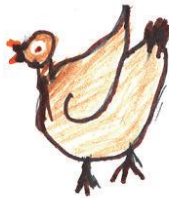
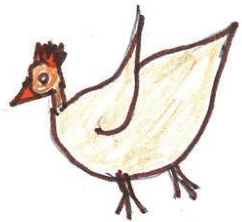
hardships caused by poverty, cultural and religious backgrounds or other factors. Through the stories touch upon the hard realities of our girls’ lives, the educators are taking a positive step forward by using their experiences or the experiences of the girls to send a message of hope and resilience.

Let’s take a journey and open our ears. The unheard voices of our girls create a tapestry of life that weaves together hope, courage and aspiration for a better future.

Village



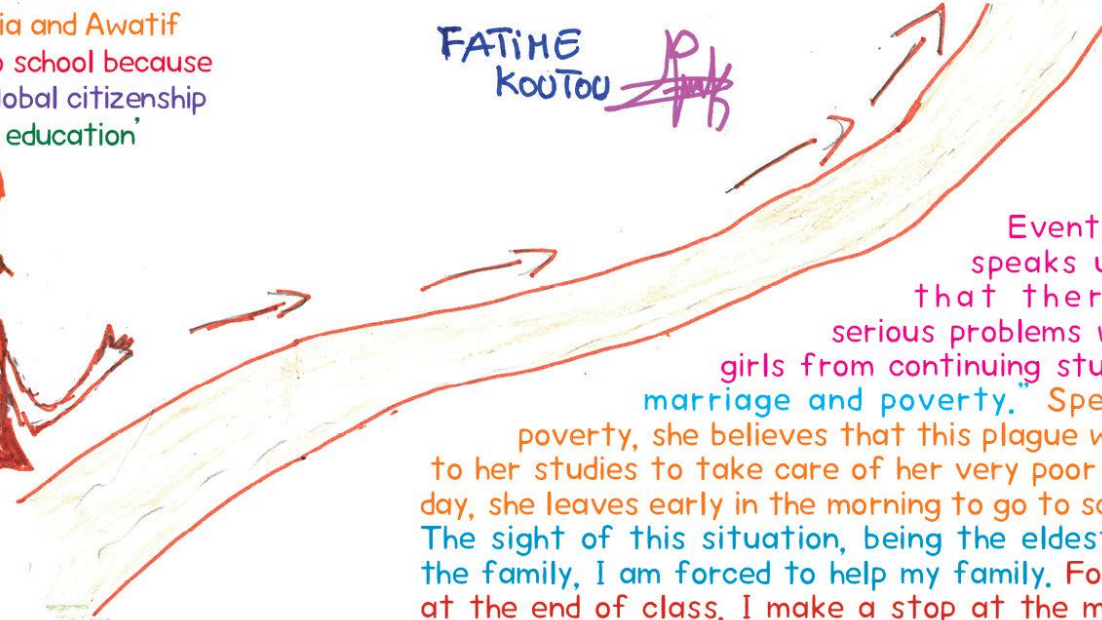
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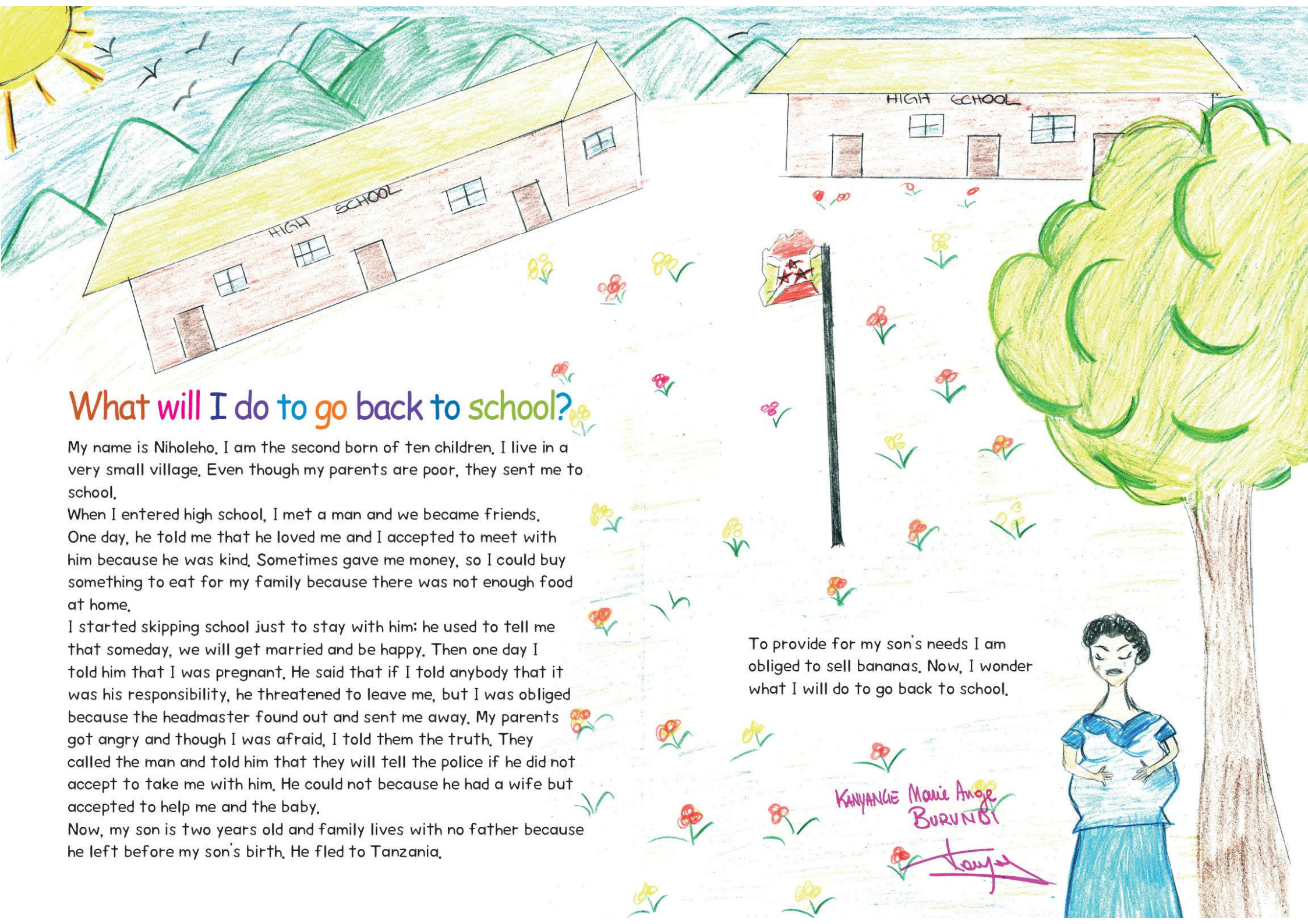
'Alia and Awatif go to school because of global citizenship education'

"It all starts with a good teacher"

FATiME KOUTOU



Eventually, Awatif speaks up, "I believe that there are two serious problems which prevent girls from continuing studies — early marriage and poverty." Speaking about poverty, she believes that this plague will put an end to her studies to take care of her very poor family. Every day, she leaves early in the morning to go to school. The sight of this situation, being the eldest daughter in the family, I am forced to help my family. For this reason, at the end of class, I make a stop at the market to buy some articles and sell them. I return home late every day, exhausted, I cannot manage to study my lessons alone so I do not advance in my studies



## What will I do to go back to school?

My name is Niholeho. I am the second born of ten children. I live in a very small village. Even though my parents are poor, they sent me to school.

When I entered high school, I met a man and we became friends. One day, he told me that he loved me and I accepted to meet with him because he was kind. Sometimes gave me money, so I could buy something to eat for my family because there was not enough food at home.

I started skipping school just to stay with him; he used to tell me that someday, we will get married and be happy. Then one day I told him that I was pregnant. He said that if I told anybody that it was his responsibility, he threatened to leave me, but I was obliged because the headmaster found out and sent me away. My parents got angry and though I was afraid, I told them the truth. They called the man and told him that they will tell the police if he did not accept to take me with him. He could not because he had a wife but accepted to help me and the baby.

Now, my son is two years old and family lives with no father because he left before my son's birth. He fled to Tanzania.

To provide for my son's needs I am obliged to sell bananas. Now, I wonder what I will do to go back to school.

KANYANGIE Marie Ange  
BURUNDI

*Kanyangie*



# Positive Thinking Brining Better Life

Nik is from a poor family. She has three siblings, two sisters and one brother. Her parents are random workers. They do not have permanent jobs. Some days, they get paid by the hour and sometimes they get paid by the week; it depends on the types of jobs. Because they are poor, her older sister stopped attending school, when she finished her lower secondary school. Nik's family faces critical financial problems many times, but she never wants to drop out of school.

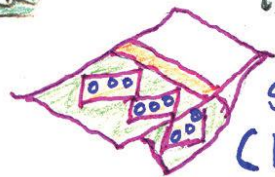
Nik also earns money in order to pay for her school fees and learning materials. She does weaving on the weekends and during the school break. She uses her money effectively.

She does not buy unnecessary things. She spends most of her money on her studies. She spends some of it on learning an extra course in English. This year is Nik's second year of upper secondary school and she also has a good performance in English. She believes that English will help her to get a job in the future.

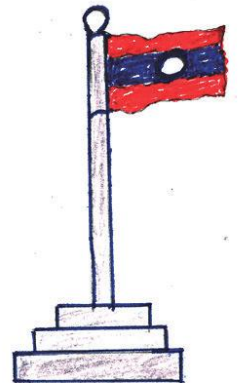
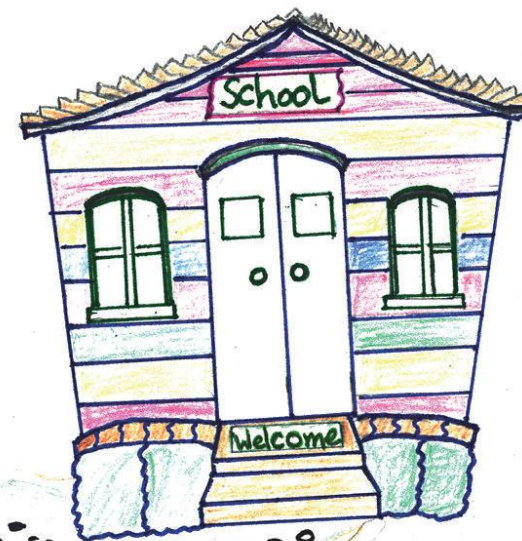
Even though Nik is living in poor conditions, she is still a lucky person. She has a lovely family which parents and her older sister give her freedom to make her choice like choosing to learn. She is a positive thinker. She never feels frustrated with her life. She said she inherits positive thinking from her parents. Her parents always say that "We cannot choose where we want to be born and do what we want to do. However, nothing in this world is impossible to change. It can change, but it takes time because we cannot change things overnight. The change or new life needs our patience, perseverance and tolerance."



Vongsone HEUANGPHIDA  
Lao PDR



Sinh  
(Lao skirt)



## A Family Determined to Succeed

I am Elisabeth, I will start my life story from my childhood when I was ten years old. I was attending primary school, grade 4. I lost my father. My mother was a housewife. So, it was difficult for her to take care of us. My uncle wanted her to get married again and she refused. So he decided to let her live alone with her three children. My elder brother was attending university. He was obliged to give up his studies and look for a job in order to take care of my mother, me, and my elder sister.

I was suffering, as I could not do anything to help my mother who was suffering a lot. Thanks to my brother, I succeeded in attending six grades of secondary school. As he was almost the only one to help the family, he asked me to put an end to my studies and attend a formal vocational school, that is, the teacher training school of Loumbila. My dream is to succeed the studies in the vocational school to become a teacher to reduce my brother's suffering, who refused to get married because he wanted to help us. I am also dreaming of earning my living in order to help my mother. I do not see any joyful part of my life. All I saw was sadness and difficulties to overcome. One day, I would like to have means to help orphans and widows.

TIENIN Béli Bi René, BURKINA-FASO



## Marakamousso's School Life

# What an intelligent girl!

Now, Marakamousso is 20. She lives in Sikocom, the suburban slum of Bamako about 5km from her upper secondary school. She is in grade 4. She started primary school in 2002. She was very intelligent. She successfully finished her tenth grade in 2011. Then she went to upper secondary school (vocational training). She did well in grades 1 and 2. In 2013, she started having problems because her father engaged and married her to her cousin who was an uneducated man with too big a family. So, she failed in her technician diploma exam due to the chores, baby care, distance from school and limited means. In 2014, she tried again and succeeded and went to grade 4. But she found more challenges and difficulties. Her chores increased. Her baby very often got sick. Her husband assigned her unfinishable tasks. Sometimes, she had to walk to school. Consequently, she failed the exam again.

Now let's smile! Sylla told me that she will do her best to succeed this year 2016. She repeated this to me twice "if you educate one girl, it's like you educate one world." She also said, "I will enroll my daughter Marama in school as soon as she reaches the age of 7 and my husband and I will support her till she gets a diploma." What a hopeful woman!





# From the Kitchen to Board

Halima is now a young, female teacher. She is 24 years old. She lives in a village in the countryside of Comoros. But she still remembers her first day of school. It remains a memorable day for her. Though it was a windy and rainy day, she was very excited about the idea of attending school where she would meet new people; speak a language which is different from her mother tongue; and also learn how to count, write, and read in French.

It is her elder brother living in the capital city (Moroni) who first had the idea to send Halima to school. He was working there as a civil servant. However, no one would believe how hard and violently the parents reacted after they had heard that suggestion coming out of their son's mouth, "Are you crazy or what?" "Did I hear you correctly?" Their father kept on asking. Then he added, "My daughter won't go to a school where she may lose our values and culture to become another person with a new culture and of course a new religion." Both parents feared that their daughter could be alienated by the European culture, behavior, and so on. Not only that, but they also expected her to stay home, taking care of the housework and waiting for a man to come and ask her to marry him.

Fortunately, Halima finally attended school thanks to her aunt living in France. She succeeded to convince the parents about the importance and necessity to send Halima to school, so as to assure a better future life for her. Thus, Halima went to school where she did better, though she was the only girl in her classroom. Now, she is a French teacher and her main advice to the students is that "An educated girl becomes an educated mother. And this one is well prepared to be among those who will develop the world."

by  
Miftah Ahmed M. M. M.  
COMOROS.



# Girls and Education

Falim Diallo is an 18 year old girl and she has two brothers. She has many difficulties. After graduating from middle school, her parents, who had little means, did not want her to continue studying because there was no school in the village. And her parents were not going to let her go to continue studies, so she could stay home and help her mother with the housework.

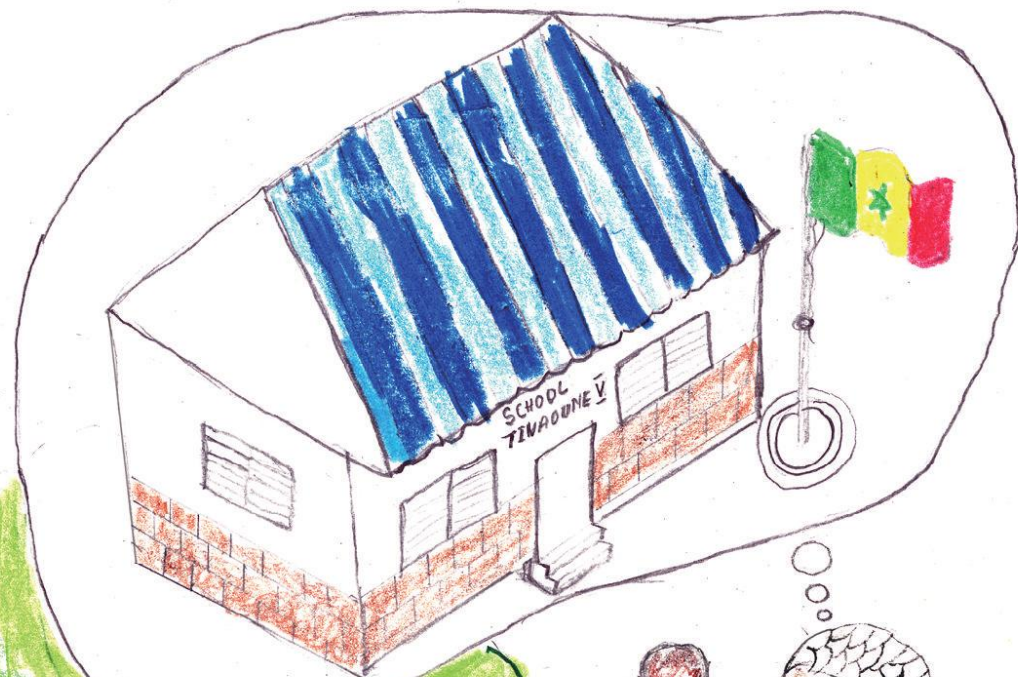
Being very determined, she went to see her aunt, a bank teller who discussed the situation with her parents and finally convinced them to let Falim continue her studies.

It was very difficult for Falim, who wanted to become a nurse, to help others. However, thanks to her aunt she could go to high school. Falim moved into town and lived with her aunt so she could attend school.

She would like to go to university but given the time and resources it requires, she opted for training in nursing after her secondary education. Currently, she is in the last secondary class and she expects to accomplish her dreams of studies as a trained nurse. According to her, today, girls should avoid early marriage and early pregnancies. We have to encourage girls to go and stay in school in order to actively contribute to the development of their society.

LEARNING TOGETHER  
LIVE  
G

HAPPINESS FOR ALL



ALL SCHOOL



Mouhamath NOIAYE  
Senegal

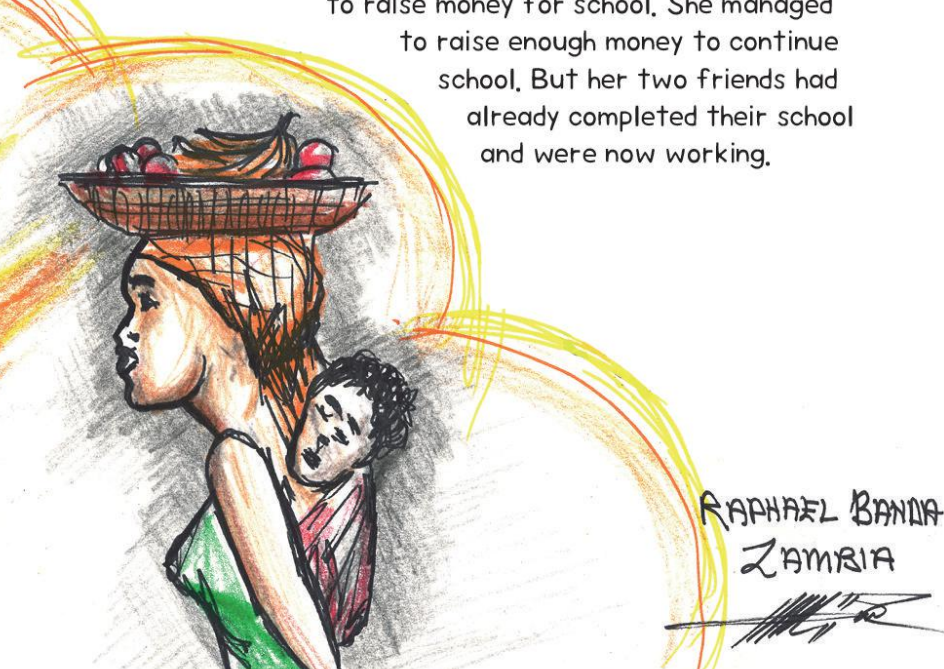


# Delayed, but not stopped!

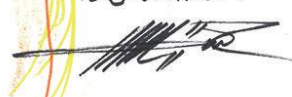


This is a sad story of one of the girls who went to one of the schools in Lusaka,

In a class of 54 learners of the final grades in one of the secondary schools in Lusaka, there were 3 girls who liked each other very much. These girls used to help each other very often and encouraged each other very much at school. One of the three girls was very intelligent and she was good in all the subjects at school. When her parents passed away, she had no one to help her pay for the school tuition and buy the school uniform. She could not get any support from even her relatives. As a result of so many problems that arose because her parents' death, she dropped out of school. She tried in vain to raise money to continue school but she could not manage. She started working as a maid in a manager's home. Her job was to look after children whom she could carry on her back, whilst she went out to sell her fruits to raise money for school. She managed to raise enough money to continue school. But her two friends had already completed their school and were now working.



RAPHAEL BANDA  
ZAMBIA




## Aneduy, the courageous orphan.

Aneduy is a 24 year old girl. She had lost both her parents at a very young age. Her aunt, who was in town came to take her. She thought she could continue school in town, but it was nothing about all this. One morning, she told her aunt that she would like to continue school and her aunt replied: "School is too expensive in town. When you are 15, I will send you to be an apprentice for a seamstress." She became a maid of the house. Her aunt owns a shop in Assigame (the biggest market of the capital town). She woke her up early in the morning. While she was busy with the domestic activities, her aunt's children were learning their lessons and were going to school. She was going to the market with her aunt usually carrying a big ice box on her head. She went around the market selling ice. After one of her brothers died for being involved in political matters, Aneduy seized the opportunity to go to the village and refused to come back in town. She stayed in the village selling fried yams and all sorts of fruits.

She developed the fruits trade between the village and the town where she settled down. She faced a lot of challenges. She met a student in university whom she helped a lot. The student won a scholarship to study in the USA. To show his thanks to her, the student decided to marry her.

From the latest news, Aneduy flew with her husband to the USA. We wish the best for her.

  
Dossèh AKASSI  
(TOGO)





By Sharmila Khandal, Nepal  
2016.09.21

## Only for Better Education

This is a story of Sharmila Praja, a 10th grade student at Amarigoti secondary school in Kathmandu, Nepal. She is originally from the remote village of the Makawanpur district, which belongs to the most endangered community named "Chepang." There are altogether four family members; her father, mother, brother and her. About 13 years ago, her parents decided to provide better education and migrated to the capital city. Due to lack of property and money, they faced many difficulties. Although Sharmila and her brother were enrolled in this public school, they could not pay for stationaries and other requirements.

Chepang family is generally known as suppressed and dominated by the so-called upper class family. They are supposed to do manual task and blue collar jobs. Her parents also worked at other very hard jobs because they had to provide a better education to their children. Although her parents wanted to hide their problems from Sharmila, she knew about all those things. Now, she is studying hard and getting a better position in her class. Her future dream is to be a doctor and serve the poor people who are living in her surrounding slum area. Hopefully, she will reach her goal.

# An Enabling Environment for the Ugandan Girl

By ~~Lucy~~ Ninamanya Gilbert  
Uganda.

Lucy, a 19 year old girl, lost her mother and her step mom, too. In a family of 10 siblings, she could only complete primary school. She stayed at home for 2 years cooking food for her sisters and brothers.

A colleague brought her to the city to forge life at 19 but she was unable to do any job with her hands.

"My dream was to be an engineer" she writes. She saved some money and bravely enrolled in an expensive plumbing course in Nakawa V.T.I.

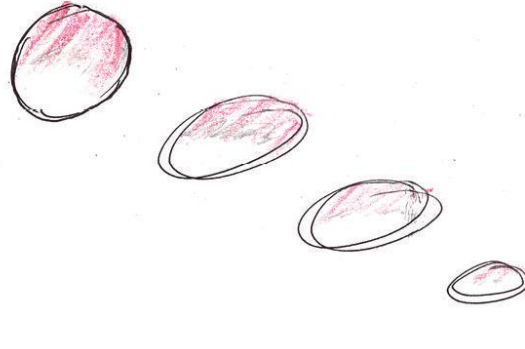
Meanwhile, she requested to study twice a week while working part-time three times a week. And since management allowed her to do this, she realized her dream now and has already requested to take the National exam.

She says "I am now motivated by my background, the counselling and guidance that I have received from the principal and the head of the department."





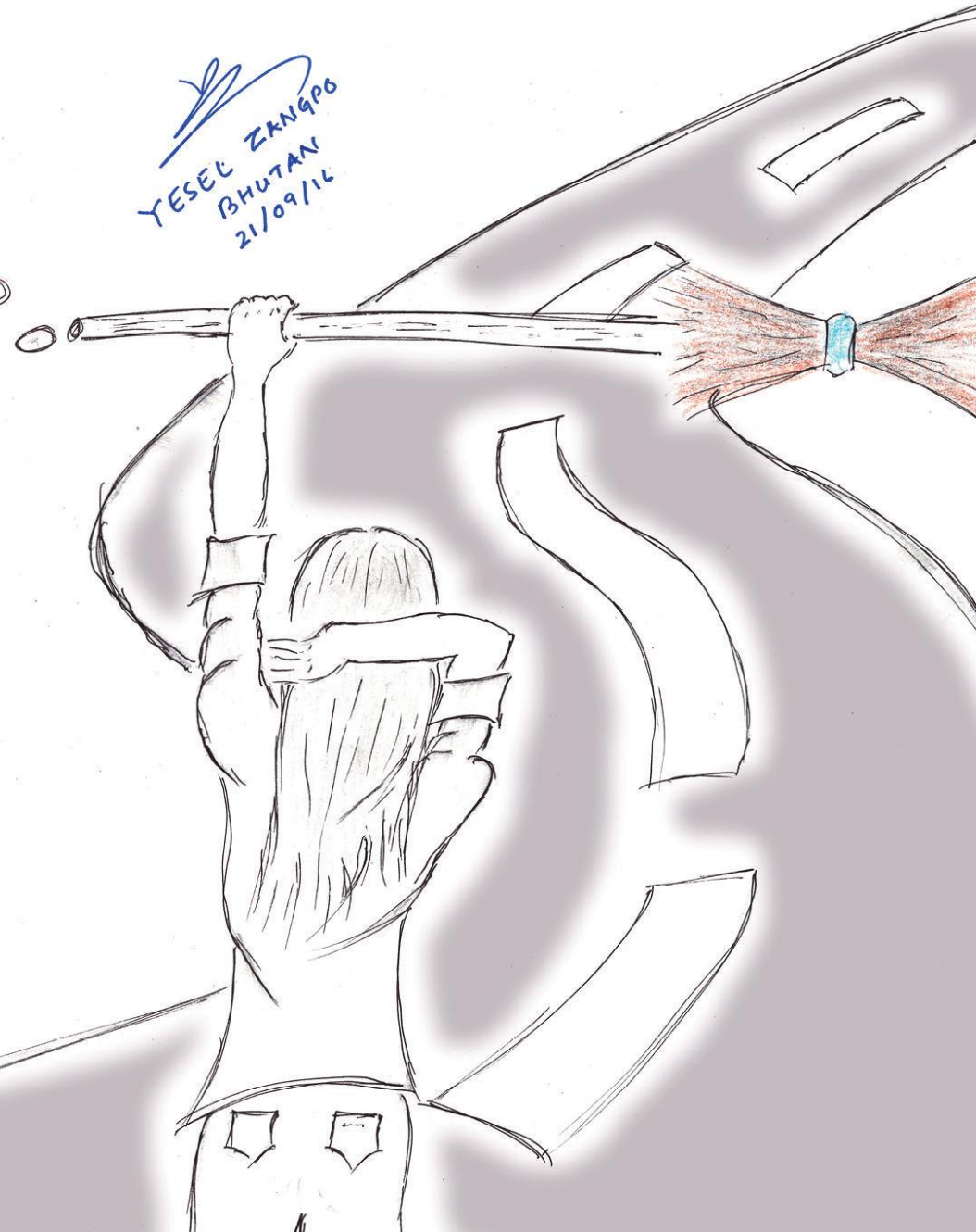
# What Is It Like?



YESEL ZANGPO  
BHUTAN  
21/09/16

Samten was 10 years old and her sister was 3 years old when their mother died. So, to look after them, their father, who was a farmer, married again. Though Samten wanted to go to school, she couldn't, as she had to earn money along with her father to support the family. At 17, she married but was left by her husband after having a child whereby she had to go back to her house. Her step-mother was not happy with the decision of Samten coming back home. So, she decided to rent a house and find a job. Eventually, she got a job which was to keep the road clean. Alongside working, she joined Non-formal education classes to achieve her long-time dream of going to the school and study.

She continued working for two years, after which she got a job as a cook at a restaurant. She hopes to buy land, own a house, educate her daughter, and earn more money, so that they can live happily.

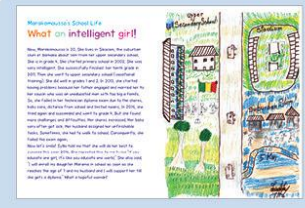






My story is about the difficulties some girls face during their academic studies. Their difficulties are related to social problems, especially the financial challenges of their families which leads them to fail or dropout of school.

**Fatimé Koutou (Chad)**



"A girl's education is like educating an entire family, a community, a country, and even one world." Despite problems and challenges of cultural beliefs; early and forced marriages; a heavy load of housework; travelling long distances to school; poverty; and other hardships; I encourage my sisters, daughters, cousins, and students towards completing school. Let your daughters, wives, sisters go to school in comfort so that they

can become globalized citizens in the future. At school, don't make any violence or sexually harass your students, classmates, or colleagues; so they can study and work as much as boys or men. Please defend girls' education to give them a better life anywhere, anytime, at any price. Thank you for your kind understanding.

**Souleymane Gniné Diarra (Mali, English teacher at CFP/SK)**



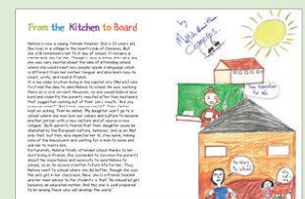
Very often teenagers think that life is fun, full of only dating and dreams. And sometimes they think adults' pieces of advice are out of fashion. They keep on complaining about their parents' worn out dogmas because they are old and they cannot understand young generation's needs. Sooner or later, these teenagers realize that their parents were wise and have deep reasons for protecting their children from making a



mistake. When they realize it, sometimes it's too late and the time cannot be turned back.

"Intabarinwa ibwirwa n'uko amaso atukuye."

**Kanyange Marie-Ange (Burundi)**



Living well is the best challenge in the world. That's why I would like to encourage girls' education so as to assure a better future life for them. Girls mustn't be kept at home just because they are girls. They have to be considered and seen first as human beings full of competences, interests, and also as hope for the future. As it is mentioned in my story, an educated girl becomes an

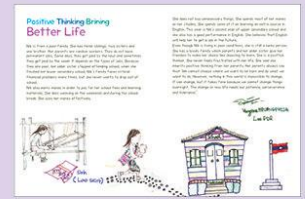
educated mother. So, just let them learn, and then they will live a brighter future life. When we let girls learn, we let the world develop.

**Miftah Ahmed Mlinde (Comoros, English teacher, Ministry of Education)**



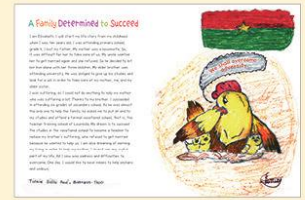
My story is "Positive Thinking Bringing Better Life." This story is very touching for me and I hope this will be a worthy lesson to be learned for those who read this story. After reading it, you will feel like you have hope and it will make you feel like you are stronger, particularly for those who are in difficult situations. In addition, I can say that positive thinking will make your life happier.

**Vongsone Heuangphida (Lao PDR)**



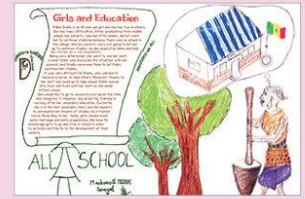
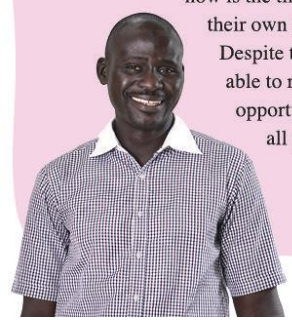
Life is full of hindrances. This is a story of a trainee and her family who are facing adversities: father's death, a mother's suffering, and a school dropout. Despite these obstacles, they are struggling and striving to get a better life.

**Tienin Bélibi René (Burkina Faso, teacher trainer at the pre-service teacher training school (ENEP) of Loumbila)**

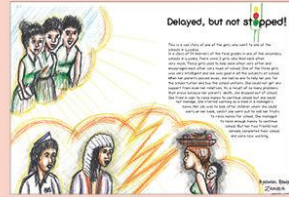


I will start with the words of Nelson Mandela-"Education is the most powerful weapon you can use to change the world." This is to confirm what he says-it is only education that can quickly develop a society. Regardless of history, we know that now is the time for women take their destiny in their own hands and try to become independent. Despite the difficulties, the young woman was able to realize her dream of continuing secondary studies to finally get the opportunity to finish nurse training as she wished. With these words, I encourage all girls to attend and remain in school.

**Mouhamath Ndiaye (Senegal, Trainer in metallic structuring at professional school of THIES' engineer and evaluator training program)**



Girls face a lot of challenges in life. There are a lot of barriers to girls' education that they have to overcome. Promoting girls' education is a very important programme and should be given the seriousness that it deserves. We should encourage girls to continue with their education because some of the barriers that prevent them from continuing with their education may only delay but not stop them. This is why I titled my short story, 'Delayed but not stopped.'



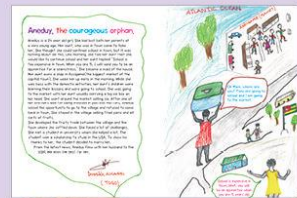
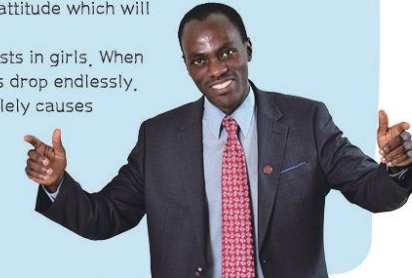
**Raphael Banda** (Zambia, Curriculum Development Specialist in mathematics and ICTs, the Curriculum Development Centre, Ministry of General Education)



Dear Readers,  
Quite often, the death or absolute poverty of parents and relatives impede girls from accessing education. It may be correct that whoever drops out of school is absorbed into the work world with or without any skills. This story attempts to highlight that girls still need to be encouraged to attend technical or vocational education and training. Girls need to learn skills, knowledge, and attitude which will help them succeed in life.

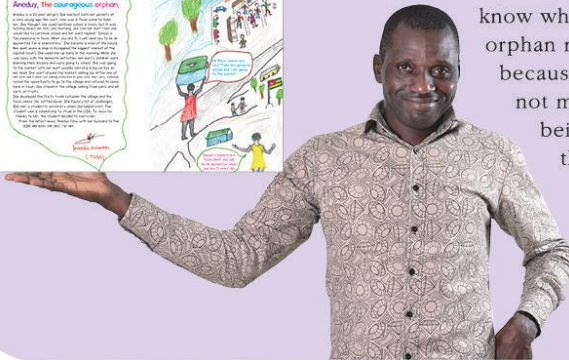
This story intends to advocate, support, and encourage keen interests in girls. When girls desperately narrate how to survive in urban areas, their tears drop endlessly. At the post upper primary level, it is no longer menstruation that solely causes inconsistency in girls' attendance or dropout from school. This story rather shows that teachers and managers of schools can make a difference. "Join the globe to support girls around the globe."

**Niwamanya Gilbert** (Uganda)



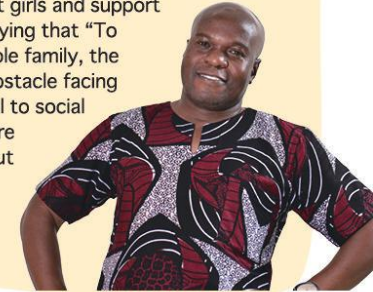
Dear Readers,  
My story is about an orphan and we all know what it means to be an orphan. An orphan needs more sympathy. Just because of her actual situation does not mean she is no longer a human being. She has rights which are the same as other human beings. Regardless of who you are, an orphan's weaknesses must not be a source of power for you.

**Dosseh Akassi** (Togo)



Collecting the unheard stories of girls in my neighborhood has made me discover the power education can have on transforming the lives of girls, particularly towards helping them realize their dreams. Everyone has a dream and our girls, whether from remote areas or from the metropolitan areas of our countries, all share the dream of a better life. It is our solemn duty to humanity to protect girls and support them to achieve this dream. The saying that "To educate a girl is to educate the whole family, the whole village, the whole nation, and the whole world" is a truism. No obstacle facing the girls today is unsurmountable. From challenges at home and school to social and health problems, we can overcome them if we all realize that we are global citizens and our responsibility is not only the local community but also the global one.

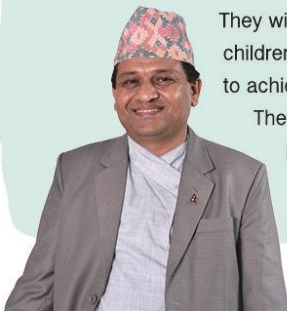
**Christopher Julio Magomelo** (Malawi, Programme officer, Malawi National Commission of UNESCO)



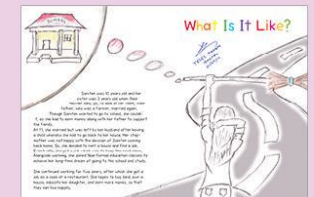
This is a real story of a Nepalese girl. Her poor parents wanted to break free from the hell they were living in. They wished for a better education for their children-so they migrated and worked hard to achieve their dream. The girl is now studying diligently. Hopefully, she will become a doctor.



**Sushil Khanal** (Nepal)



Dear Readers,  
When you read and see through the stories, you will get the picture of how children, especially girls, are suffering around the world. Sometimes, it's difficult for them to even find the standing ground. Many of them end up in situations or places where they never imagined they would be. Therefore, we hope the stories in this book would make you realize the reality that girls are facing and help them in as many ways as you can. "Let us join hands to help the disadvantaged children."



**Yesel Zangpo** (Bhutan)







“It all starts with a good teacher”

Alia and Awatif go to school because of global citizenship education.



YANGSOOK



JAY



ALBERT



AKHTERUZZAMAN



JISOO



KATHY



ARISTARQUE



LILIAN



RAKENTAI



TAEHEE



FEKADE



PASCALINA



DONGIL



HOUKABE



YUIN



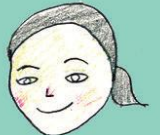
YEONWOO



YONGWOOK



ROSALIA



KENCHO



VONGSOME



JIMIN



JUNGYEON



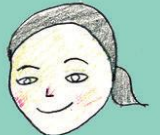
GILBERT



DIARRA



ROSALIA



KENCHO



DONGHYUN



FATIMÉ



RAPHAEL



YESEL



RENÉ



MOUHAMATH



AKASSI



MARIE-ANGE



MIFTAH



GUEYE



GOVINDA



CHRISTOPHER



SUSHIL

Fatimé Koutou

Kanyange Marie Ange

Vongsone Heuangphida

Tienin Bélibi René

Souleymane Gniné Diarra

Miftah Mlinde Ahmed

Mouhamath Ndiaye

Raphael Banda

Dossèh Akassi

Sushil Khanal

Niwamanya Gilbert

Christopher J Magomelo

Yesel Zangpo