

THE WORLD IN SCHOOL 2024

THE

READING ROCKET

FOOD, WATER AND CLIMATE IN KENYA



VERDENSMÅL
for bæredygtig udvikling



OXFAM
Danmark

ABOUT THE COVER PHOTO
Maximilla lives in Turkana
and goes to school with
Ramsi. Read more on page 8.



Photo: Hans Bach

Oxfam works with schools and education in more than 80 countries around the world. The Reading Rocket is part of a larger campaign called The World in School. When you read the book, you take part in raising awareness on Sustainable Development Goal 4 about ensuring that every child has the right to a good school. You are doing this together with millions of other students around the world.



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WELCOME TO THE READING ROCKET

This year we are visiting Kenya in East Africa. It is a big country with dry desert, fertile soil, large lakes and high mountains. But the weather and nature are changing. The country has been hit by a long drought and major flooding. This is destroying the soil. The poorest people in the country are affected the most. And 4.5 million people are lacking food due to the drought.

Kenya is one of the richest countries in Africa. Yet there is a huge disparity between the richest and the poorest people in the country. The fertile land and the country's resources are very unevenly distributed. In Kenya, 1 in 3 people live in poverty, and in rural areas, far too many children never finish grade 6.

In this book, we meet six different children. Maximilla lives in Turkana, where the drought has lasted for more than five years. We also meet Gloria, who cannot get to school during the rainy season when the path from her house is flooded. In Nairobi, the boy Gift has to fetch water from the river near his school, and Rachael is concerned about pollution in the city. Brian fishes off the Kenyan coast when his family cannot pay for his school. Gladys and her siblings often only eat one meal a day - the lunch they get at school. But what all the children have in common is that they have dreams and wishes for a good future for themselves, their families and their country.



Enjoy your reading!

Line Gørup Trolle
Campaign Manager,
The World in School

Kenya is located in East Africa and is 13 times larger than Denmark. Approximately 55 million people live in the country. It is bordered by Uganda, South Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia and Tanzania. To the east, Kenya has a long coastline on the Indian Ocean. Kenya is located on the equator. So there is an equal amount of daylight and darkness throughout the year.



In large parts of Kenya, the landscape is lush and the climate tropical. Elsewhere it is very dry with steppes and desert. In Kenya, many people make their living from farming. There is drought in many parts of the country and the land has become difficult to cultivate. As a result, many people do not have enough food.



There are more than 40 different peoples living in Kenya. The largest peoples are the Kikuyu, Luhya and Kamba. In this book we also hear about the Masai, Mijikenda and Turkana. English and Swahili are the two official languages. Almost everyone speaks both languages, and many also speak a local language. Almost half of the population is under the age of 15.



Kenya is a lush and rich country. Yet almost 16 million people live in poverty. This is because the land and the country's resources are very unevenly distributed. Many have to walk long distances to fetch water. Women in particular often spend several hours a day retrieving water. There would be enough food and water for everyone if it was distributed equally.





MAXIMILLA

I GET UP BEFORE THE SUN

☰ LINE GØRUP TROLLE 📍 HANS BACH

I open my eyes. It is dark. I can hear the wind blowing and hitting sand against the wall of rushes. There is a smell of smoke. My sisters are asleep. My mom is puttering outside.

I'm drinking a cup of tea. I walk to school with Jennifer and Susanne. We pass camels and huts. We cross the sandy road. Susanne grabs a booklet from my bag. She hides it. Then I take hers. We laugh. It hurts and feels good in my stomach at the same time. That is how much we laugh.



My name is Maximilla. My friends call me Maxi. I live in Turkana with my family. My father is in heaven. He had a motorcycle accident four months ago. Behind our huts is a big pile of sand. That is where he is buried.






My father used to play with us. His eyes were always smiling. He told me that school is important. He bought me my first school uniform. But when he died, it hurt so much inside me that I did not go to school. After a few weeks, my teacher came to visit. She said it would be good for me to go back to class.

We used to have 30 goats. My father took them into the bush so they could find plants to eat. He brought food, water, and a blanket for himself. After a week or two, he would come back with fat goats. Then he stayed home for a few days. The goats drank water at the pump before they all left again.

Then the big drought came. The plants could not grow. The goats could not find enough food. Some of them died. We had to sell the last goats when my father needed to go to the hospital. The drought has lasted for more than five years. Before I was born, we had rain twice a year. My mother has told me that. But now you never know. My mother helps take care of my grandmother's goats.





Me and my mom sew palm leaves together into brooms and mats. It is called makuti. My mother wants to open a kiosk. Then she would not have to go from town to town. On the days she sells something, we get food.



My school is my own place. This is how I feel. Sometimes I like to go there early. Then I can sit in the big room and read a book all by myself before the others arrive.

I am in the second grade. Our teacher's name is Jane. She teaches us in all subjects. I want to be a teacher myself when I grow up.

Some days at school I am hungry. I drink a lot of water from the pump to fill my stomach. For lunch we have githeri. It is boiled beans and corn. The first bite is warm and soft.



When the sun is low again, I fetch water with Christine and Jennifer. We drag large jugs through the hot sand. We talk and sing. And share secrets.





At the pump we wash our faces, arms and legs. The water is nicely cool and cleans away the dust. Some days we do not fill up the jugs completely. We tell our mothers that we could not drag any more. Then we must go again. This way we get more time together.



My mom says that I am good at making fires. Not every nine-year-old can do that. When my mom comes home, I have dinner ready. I have cleaned the beans from small stones. She shares the food between us and our neighbors. That is how we do it. When we have some, we share. She also saves some for breakfast.

We have three huts. This is our awi. We have a kitchen hut and a hut for our stuff. We also have a sleeping hut without a roof. We do not need a roof. But the walls keep the wind out.

I am lying in the dark next to my siblings. We can see the moon and thousands of stars. I think about my notebook. It is completely full. And I think about my dad. I know I want to go to school every day.



360°



Join Maximilla
at school.



GLORIA

WHEN THE FIRST RAIN FALLS

☰ LINE GØRUP TROLLE 📷 HANS BACH

I am lying on my stomach with my book. I forget the world outside. I disappear into the words. I share my bedroom with my brother. But he is not home from school yet. It is nice and quiet here.





My name is Gloria, and I am 9 years old. I live in the house at the top of the hill. My uncles, aunts and cousins live in the other houses. And my grandparents. My father works in the town of Mtwaba. He is not often at home with us in Ganze. I visited him during a vacation with my mother and brother. We watched Tom and Jerry and ate mabuyu. It is candy made from the seeds of the baobab tree.

My mother and the other women grow maize and beans on the hills below our house. But we are lacking rain. The last harvest was very small. Now the maize is drying in the sun. My grandmother beats the corn and shakes off the husks. We have prepared the soil again. My mother says you must be ready to sow when the first rain falls. Otherwise, you will not harvest.



I walk to school on a long path. The sun is baking. The path goes down through a valley. Past the big baobab tree, I feel like eating mabuyu. The red candy is both sweet and sour. You can suck on it for a long time. When you are done, you spit out the baobab seed.





When the rain falls, the valley turns into a river. During the rainy season, there are days when we cannot go to school. Sometimes my cousin Stella and I have to wait for hours. When the water gets low enough, we hold each other's hands and walk slowly into the river. The bottom is muddy and slippery. We must be careful not to fall.

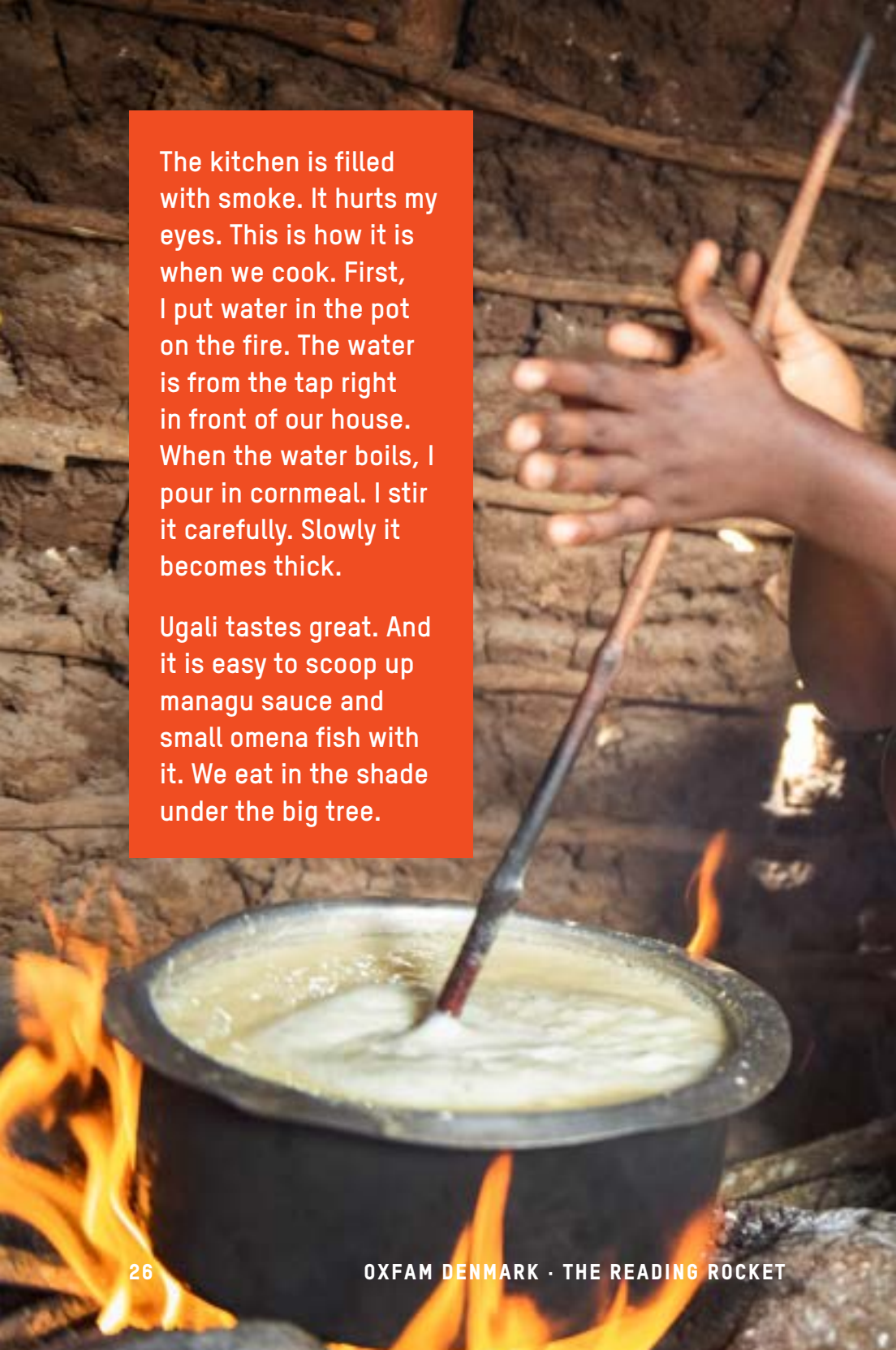


Today is a special day. There are notes on every table in the classroom. We have an exam like all other 3rd graders in Kenya. I can hear a rooster crowing, and chatter from the other classes. I am trying my best. I hope I can answer all the questions.

I want to become a doctor. I once went to a real hospital. I saw how the doctors helped all the sick people. I would like to do that too.

The best time of the day is break time. We play lenga-lenga. "Throw it, throw it to me," I shout loudly to Sylvia. I jump to the side, so she does not hit me. We laugh. I eagerly shout again and throw myself forward to catch the ball.



A person is cooking ugali in a large metal pot over a fire. The pot is filled with a thick, yellowish mixture. The person is using a long wooden spoon to stir the mixture. The background is a rustic, mud-brick wall. The fire is visible at the bottom of the pot.

The kitchen is filled with smoke. It hurts my eyes. This is how it is when we cook. First, I put water in the pot on the fire. The water is from the tap right in front of our house. When the water boils, I pour in cornmeal. I stir it carefully. Slowly it becomes thick.

Ugali tastes great. And it is easy to scoop up managu sauce and small omena fish with it. We eat in the shade under the big tree.





I am the one who lets our goats out. I tie them to a tree with long ropes. This allows them to walk around, but not to run away. In the evening I chase them back inside. Sometimes they split up and go in different directions. They are in the house next to our kitchen at night.



My favorite thing is Christmas. Then my father comes home. He slaughters a goat and roasts it over the fire. All the neighbors come over. We dance and sing. And then we go into town, where there are happy people in the streets all evening.



360°



Visit Gloria
in her room.



GIFT

THE GREEN RIVER

 LINE GØRUP TROLLE  HANS BACH

Gift carefully folds the paper. First in half. Then diagonally. Meanwhile, he thinks about Grace. What could his sister be doing right now? Maybe she is sitting in the dining hall at the boarding school. She has their favorite book, *Beast Quest*. They have read it many times. When Grace comes home on vacation, it will be great. They will talk about everything and watch *Ricky Zoom* on TV. The paper airplane is finished. He can fold them in his sleep. That is how many he has made.

Gift is 10 years old and in 6th grade. He started school early because he wanted to go with his sister when she started school. And he was allowed to. Gift lives with his mother in the area of Kawangware in Nairobi. He does not remember his father. They have not seen him since his parents got divorced when Gift was one year old.

Open sewers and fights

The streets are crowded with people. Gift does not like to walk alone. But his friends from home are not in the same school. So they only walk part of the way together. He has heard stories of others being stopped on the street by strangers who threatened them and took all their stuff.

Gift takes the short way to school so that he is not late. He walks past dogs, chickens and turkeys scratching in the dirt. The smell of bonfires and wet garbage fills the air. Women sell mandazi bread from a small fireplace. Men push heavy wagons packed with large jerry cans. There are many liters of water in each.

LEVEL P4-P6





Dark green water runs in a gutter in the street. The “green river” is an open sewer. There are bottles, bags, and garbage in the water. Some of it floats along, others remain at the banks.

Gift turns into a narrow road. Here he has to jump over the sewer. He sets off. He always fears landing in the murky, green water. He feels slippery ground under one shoe, but the other foot finds a foothold. Soon he is on the other side.

When Gift has the time, he takes the long way to school along the main streets. Then he does not have to jump over the sewer. Once, when Gift was walking home alone in the narrow streets of Kawangware between the many tin sheds, some men blocked his way. They shouted angrily at each other. One of them lashed out and the other fell over. Gift was scared. But he ran past them. That day he felt brave.

It takes Gift fifteen minutes to walk to school, when he takes the short route. The last part of the path he walks alone.





During recess, students play in the school yard. Each door in the blue houses leads to a class.



School is a safe place

Gift hurries through the blue gate. In the school yard, he knows everyone. There are 18 students in the class. His best friend is Nicholas. They love to play ball during break time. Basketball, netball, and soccer. And kati. You must avoid getting hit when the others throw the ball. Otherwise, you are out.

Math is the best. He learns both about numbers and how to make things. Gift has built a helicopter with his group. They made it out of a soda can and engine parts from a DVD player. They found out how to do it on YouTube. Gift has also built a car that can drive itself. His favorite teacher is Josephine. She teaches a class where they learn to cook, do laundry, knit scarves, and weave tablecloths.

The students clean the school every day. But they lack water in Nairobi. Some days there is water in the big, black tank in



the school yard. Here they wash their hands and fetch drinking water. When the tank is empty, the students must bring their own drinking water. And they fetch water for cleaning in the Nairobi River, which runs right behind the school.

Gift and the others hold onto Christopher's clothes as he leans over the river and lowers the bucket. He pulls it back up full of water. Gift pours the water into a canister. The bucket is heavy, and it is difficult. They do this many times. Until they have enough water for all the floors in the classrooms

From the countryside to the big city

It has been four years since Gift and his mother moved to Nairobi. Before, they lived in the countryside with his grandmother in Machakos. But the drought came, and his mother could not find work. It was hard to afford food and water. His sister is still in Machakos at the boarding school.

Gift remembers the day they moved. He had been looking forward to it for a long time. They only had their clothes on the bus. Everything else in the house was his grandmother's things. Gift likes living in Kawangware better because there are always many children to play with.

At home in the block

At the bottom of the staircase, the floor is wet and a little dark. Gift lays his head back and looks up at the sky. On each floor, laundry hangs and drips. Most houses here are on one level. But Gift and his mother live in a high-rise. They call it the block. Their apartment has one toilet and two rooms - a bedroom and a room with both a kitchen and a living room. Gift sleeps on the couch. In many other families, six to eight people live in one apartment.

Gift runs up the stairs. He needs to get to the 4th floor. His mother is sitting by the coffee table making little elephants out of beads. Gift's mother is a chef, but right now she has no job. She sells the bead animals. She has promised to teach him how to make them.

Gift does his homework on the couch when he gets home. It is also here he sleeps at night, where he watches TV and plays on his mother's phone.





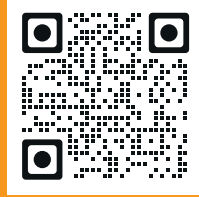
For dinner, they make sukuma wiki from green leaves, onion and tomato. They will have rice with it. The water in the tap is only for bathing. So they use water from a jug they bought. Gift sautés the onions while his mother chops tomatoes. Gift watches carefully and he is doing his best. There are so many things he wants to be good at.

Paper airplanes and pilot dreams

Gift's mother does not allow him to play in the street. It is too dangerous. But inside the block, he and his friends can play soccer on the ground floor. They speak Kamba together. Gift also speaks Swahili and English like most people. But he is proud of being Kamba because they are one of the larger groups of people in Kenya. It is also nice and a little easier to speak Kamba with his friends when they talk about problems. Once when they were playing soccer, one of the others accidentally kicked a ball into the street. It landed in the sewer. The guy who owned the ball got very angry. But then they talked calmly in Kamba and became good friends again.

Gift brings his paper airplane into the hallway and throws it over the railing. It lands in a puddle on the ground floor. Bravin looks up and the others laugh. When Gift grows up, he wants to be a pilot. He wants to fly people from country to country so they can visit their loved ones. He runs down to his friends. Now they will play soccer.

360°



Join Gift
at school.



RACHAEL

A SONG FOR THE WORLD

 LINE GØRUP TROLLE  HANS BACH

Rachael is humming a song about flowers. She looks out the window of the bus. On Nairobi's roads, cars drive close together in many lanes. Motorbikes cross in and out between matatus, the colorful minibuses with large drawings and patterns. On the back of a matatu it says: "We ride with God." Along the road are stalls with fruits, beads, locks, plants, clothes, furniture and gates. There is so much to look at. There are also empty bottles, old food, and broken shoes on the roadside. A sewer grate is clogged. In some parts of the city, Rachael can smell the garbage.

Rachael is 10 years old. She is the only child on the school bus. But after a while, the driver stops and Gloria and Precious get in. The three girls talk with each other the rest of the way. The bus stops many times. It often takes an hour and a half.

Rachael is worried

The trash on the side of the road makes Rachael sad. She knows it is not good for the earth. At school, she has written a poem. It is about how the world is polluted and the climate is changing. Today she is going to read it out loud. "My heart hurts so much - because the world is in danger..." She practices one more time. She hopes that many people will listen and start doing something. There are children at the school who cough a lot. Many get brown teeth because the water from the tap is salty. The salt is also not good for the trees the students have planted at the school. But this is the water they have. She can also see it at home in the garden where they usually grow vegetables. But right now, they are waiting for the rain.

LEVEL P4-P6





Rachael's class teacher is Salome Rono. She teaches math, English, physical education, and art.



The new school

Utawala is a big primary school. It is located on a military compound with a high fence all around. Rachael has been here for almost a year. Before the holidays, she was in a private school. But it was too expensive. She had to pass three tests and an interview to be allowed to start at the new school. Luckily, she passed.

She still remembers the first day. Her grandmother drove her. On the way there in the car, Rachael did not say anything. As she and her grandmother entered the school yard, Rachael held her breath. A group of girls greeted her with big smiles. The classes were called North, South, East and West. They showed her to 4th North. She was student number 66 in the class. And she quickly made a lot of good friends. Rachael has been happy with the school ever since. Her favorite subject is math. It is fun to learn, and the numbers are easy for her to understand. Miss Rono's math class is always full of laughter and singing games.

During the morning break, Rachael walks with Sumeya and the others over to the big green-and-yellow building. In the dining hall, they get two slices of bread and a cup of tea with milk and sugar. They sit at long tables with hundreds of other students. The tea is sweet and hot. Rachael pours it back and forth between two mugs to cool it down while she chats with her friends.



In the large square behind the school, the class plays at break time. You can see smoke from burning garbage rising from behind trees in the distance. Everyone stands in a large circle. In the center, Rachael shouts "nyama nyama." It means "meat meat." Then she names an animal. If the animal is edible, the others must jump. Every time someone in the circle jumps when she mentions an animal you do not eat, everyone laughs.

Rachael has very little time to play at home. But during recess, she enjoys skipping, singing games, and playing basketball.





There is a wall around the family garden. Rachael likes taking care of their plants and animals.

Behind the green gate

Since her parents got divorced, Rachael and her mother have been living behind the big, green gate with her grandparents. Their maid, Regina, lives here too. She cleans and organizes the house. She is good at making Rachael's favorite dish, chapati with stuffing. Rachael makes her own bed and keeps her room tidy.

She enjoys tending the garden with Guka and Cucu, as she calls them. That means grandfather and grandmother in Kikuyu. Between the house and the high wall, they grow cabbage, pumpkins, spinach, and carrots. But they have not yet planted. They are waiting for the rainy season, which should have started by now. Rachael waters the lemon tree so it does not dry out. She collects eggs and feeds the chickens. They can peck, so she is careful. They also have two cats and a dog called Simba. This means lion in Swahili. Rachael likes to look after the land and the animals here. She would also like to take care of the entire Earth.

Songs in the dark

When Rachael comes home from school, it is often so late that she does not change from her school uniform into her regular clothes. She rushes to do her homework. Then she eats dinner and gets into her pyjamas. Some evenings there is time to do the dishes with grandma. Standing in the kitchen together, just the two of them, is nice. Other days they sing songs in Kikuyu together in the dark before bedtime.



Rachael's mother is a lawyer in the center of Nairobi. There she helps others. She works from early in the morning until late at night. They always manage to say good morning to each other. And then they have time together on Sundays. On Saturdays, her mother is at chama. Here many mothers get together to talk and help each other. Once there was someone who needed money. So they all got together and helped her.



When Rachael comes home from school, she knocks on the gate and is let in.



Rachael's grandfather's name is Obadiah, her mother's name is Susan and her grandmother's name is Regina.

On Sunday mornings, the family goes to church. Rachael likes the hymns and gospel music that fill the church and her body with beautiful tones. Afterwards, she sits with her mom on the couch and watches TV. Her favorite is watching *Miraculous*, where Ladybug and Cat Noir save the world.

Flowers

Rachael has not seen her father since her parents got divorced four years ago. She was very sad at the time. She thinks about him less and less now. But on the days where she does get sad, singing comforts her. It makes her feel lighter in her body. Her mother is proud of how Rachael has coped and blossomed. Rachael wants to be a singer. Currently, her favorite song is "Flowers" by Miley Cyrus. She sings it with her friends at school. Rachael likes it because the lyrics are about believing in yourself. She wants to write her own songs with lyrics that make people want to take care of the Earth and help each other.



Join Rachael for recess
in the dining room.



BRIAN

WE KNOW THE SEA

 LINE GØRUP TROLLE  HANS BACH

They walk into the sea wearing sandals. Brian walks right behind Frank in the narrow path with sandy soil. If you step off to the side, you can get spikes from the many sea urchins up in your foot. Brian and his older brother are going out where the water is deep enough. But not all the way out where the waves are breaking. They put on goggles. Brian fastens the strap on the harpoon. He points the tip downwards and away from himself. Then he carefully dives into the cool water. It feels good. The water is clear. When he touches the bottom, sand and pebbles swirl up. He spots a red-striped fish among the rocks. Brian takes aim. Squints his eyes. Sends all thoughts into his hands. The spear of the harpoon chases off into the water, through the fish and into the sand. He got it.

The tide

Brian is 12 years old. He lives on the Kenyan coast with his parents and five siblings. When they cannot afford to pay for school, Brian and Frank go fishing. In the middle of the day, they walk along a small path through a large thicket towards the sea. The sun is high, and the air is warm. They have made the harpoons themselves. On the beach, Brian stands still and looks at the water. He notices the movement of the sea. It needs to be low tide so they can see the fish and avoid the many sea urchins. He knows the sea well. Frank has taught him.

Frank and Brian stay out at sea until they have enough fish. Or until the tide comes in again. When they get back onto the beach, the wind feels cold, and their clothes are dripping. Today they have enough fish. They can sell some and eat some themselves.



Brian loads the harpoon by tightening the red rubber band. Then the spear can be fired.

Live fish in bags

Most days, Brian's father fishes from a big boat. He and the other fishermen sail beyond the reef and sometimes as far north as the coast of Somalia. They are after rare fish that people buy for their aquariums. Brian's father catches them with nets and brings them ashore alive in bags full of water. When he catches a lot of fish, he can afford Brian's school.

Brian's father says the ocean has changed. He sees fewer fish than he did ten years ago. At the same time, there are more people fishing today and they get less money for the fish. This makes it difficult to earn enough money for food, the children's school and school uniforms. Therefore, Brian and his brother must help with the fishing, even though their father would prefer that they could go to school every day.

Long way to school

Brian has chosen to attend Kikambala School. It is further away than his brother's school. But Brian had friends there. And they told him that the teachers were good. Brian shares the bench with Erik and Samuel. "Good morning 5th grade," says Mohamed. He is their class teacher. The students stand up and reply: "Good morning, Mr. Kibwana." They have Swahili in first lesson. In grade 5, there are 42 boys and 34 girls, but today only 60 students are in the class. The rest are at home. If you do not pay for school, you are sent home to get school fees. Or your parents must come and talk to the headmaster.

Brian can hear a bird singing loudly. He looks out the window. In the courtyard, two boys are washing their hands. A pleasant breeze blows in through the open window. It is not yet too warm in the dark classroom. He pulls in his stomach as it rumbles. They get porridge during the morning break, but there is no lunch at school anymore. Many students go home to eat. But Brian lives too far away. He waits to eat until the afternoon. Brian thinks about how if he had a bike, he could reach the school faster.



Brian's school day starts at 6:30 and ends at 15:30



At break time, they play golli. Brian pulls back his middle finger. He takes aim. Squints his eyes. Sends all thoughts into his hands. He lets go of his finger. It makes a flick. The green glass ball flies. It hits the white marble. Ali is out. Brian can feel his body tingling. He shoots his ball again. This time after Erik's marble. Imagine if he can knock out the rest in one move. Everyone plays against each other. They laugh and cheer for one another.

Maweni – the city of rocks and stones

Most of Brian's family live in Maweni. His grandfather was born here. Their houses are made from the stones and rocks that fill the earth here. The rocks look a bit like brown coral sticking out of the sandy soil here and there.



Brian's father's name is Hakika. His younger siblings are Michael, Patience, Marion, and Chris. His mother's name is Julia.

It is Brian's father who wakes up Brian and his siblings in the morning at 5 am.



Brian's family has a faucet right outside their house. But it does not work. Therefore, they have to fetch water in jugs.

Brian fetches water from the neighbor's tap. The neighbor is his uncle. Then he cleans the fish he and Frank have caught. He scrapes off the scales with a knife, cuts open the belly and removes the guts. The family's ducks get them, and they squawk and push to get a bite. Brian collects firewood and small sticks, which he carefully places in a small pile outside the house. On the fire, he roasts the entire harvest of fish. They are crunchy and delicious.

Brian's grandmother lives in the house next door. She often sits with Brian leaning against the wall of the house and tells him about the Mijikenda people. She is teaching him how to make makuti. They dry palm leaves and sew them together around a stick to make roofs for their houses. "Knowledge is wealth," she says. "It is good to go to school, but it is also good to be able to make makuti with your hands." Grandma uses many special expressions when she talks and teaches him Mijikenda words. Brian likes to sit there and listen to her for long periods of time.

Everyone can join in when the children of Maweni play soccer in the field by the village.



Come on, come on, score!

Francis, Tom and Brian turn up the music. Fast-paced Afrobeat rhythms sound between the houses. They have been practicing a choreography. The hardest part is doing it at exactly the same time. They laugh at each other every time they get a break right. Brian feels free when he dances.

In the last rays of sunlight, Brian and his friends play soccer. They climb through the barbed wire fence into the field. The ball is already in play. "Your grandma is so cool she flies around on a spoon," Brian shouts to Tom, who cracks up laughing. This is an old joke about a witch flying in the moonlight. Brian laughs too. But then he gets the ball. "Hivyo hivyo kafunge," Francis shouts. "Come on, come on, score!" Brian shoots the ball towards the goal, which is made of wooden sticks with a rope connecting them. He jumps high and smiles widely as the ball goes in.

Brian is looking forward to watching the Manchester City game on TV on Saturday. He always looks out for the shirt with the number 9 on it. That is his favorite player, Erling Haaland. Brian hopes he scores. He is going to watch the game with his dad. Afterwards, Brian and his brothers will be going down to the big pitch to cheer for their dad and the other men when they play football.



360°



Visit Brian
in Maweni.



GLADYS

THE BIG DROUGHT

 LINE GØRUP TROLLE  HANS BACH

"Sanaipei...?" Gladys can hear her mother's voice whispering softly. Sanaipei is her Masai name. She is named after her grandmother. Her mother calls her Sanaipei, but most people call her Gladys. She opens her eyes. It is still dark. It is five o'clock and time to get up. They have no power for light. But her mom has a phone with a flashlight. Gladys lights a fire inside and makes tea. When the goats had kids, the children would have milk for breakfast. They look after the goats for their grandmother because there is a drought at her place in Namanga.

Gladys is 12 years old. She lives in the village of Ildamat Ward with her mother, father and four siblings. She also has an older sister, who lives at her school. Gladys is Masai and speaks Masai. She also speaks English and Swahili like most people.



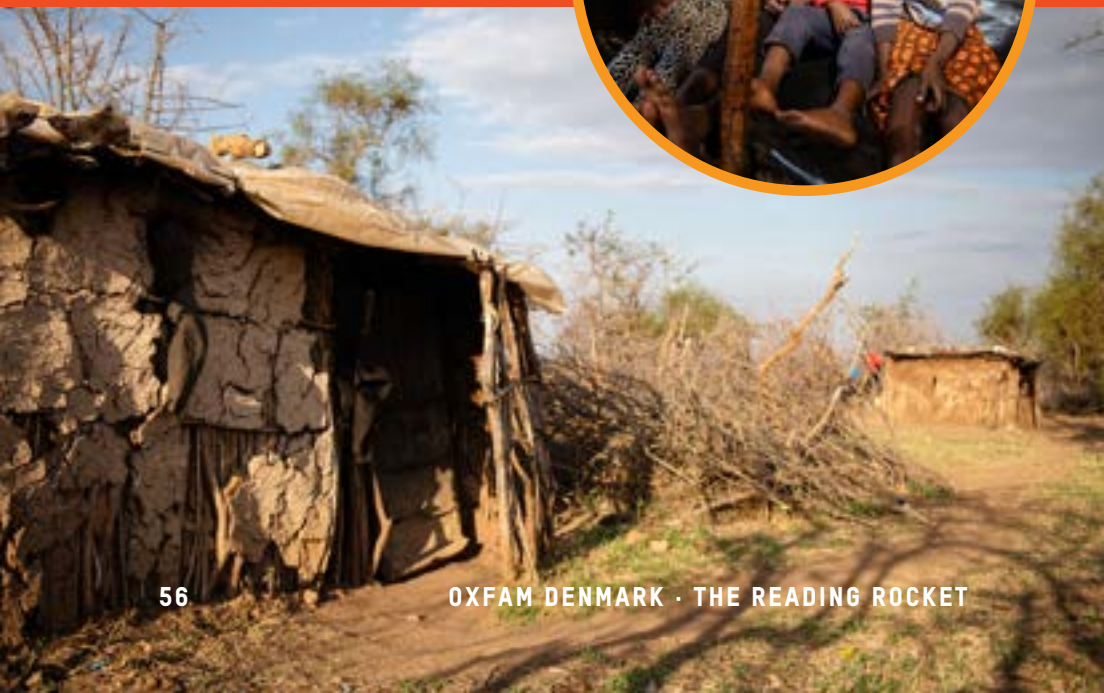
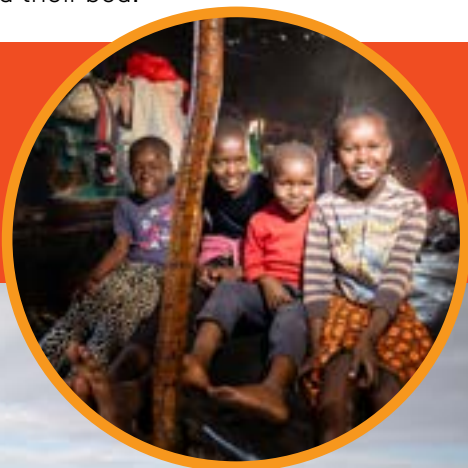
LEVEL P4-P6

We lived off our animals

Gladys is not afraid of anything. Except maybe lions and too much rain falling all at once. Because then the water comes into their house. Gladys sleeps with her mother and younger siblings in their Masai house. It is called a manyatta. Her mother built it herself, as the Masai people have always built it. It is made of thick branches and cow dung. It is like mud, but it keeps the branches together better. The walls keep the heat in at night and out during the day. In the other house next to this one, her father and older brother sleep.

It has not rained for a long time. But when it does rain, sometimes a lot of water comes down. One time there was so much rain inside that the water reached their bed.

When Gladys' mother built the family's houses, she had to use a lot of water to soften the cow dung, so that the walls could be shaped.





Gladys' mother is called Faith, her older brother is Rimone, and her father is Samuel. Her siblings are Sopiato, Talash and Salash.

The big drought started almost three years ago. They used to have two rainy seasons every year: "the long rains" and "the short rains." But now you can no longer tell when it will rain, or whether it will rain at all. And then there is no food for the animals. The family used to have sheep, but Gladys' mother had to sell the last ones when the drought came.

The Masai people have lived off their animals for centuries. The men used to tend cows and camels. The women looked after the goats and sheep and took care of everything in the house. This was how the work was organized. But this is changing now. Gladys' mother says it is too unreliable to make a living from the animals. She has started to learn how to farm.



Margreth, Gladys, Elisabeth and Jackline share one English book.

At school, we plant trees

Gladys raises her hand and snaps her fingers. Their English teacher, Elisabeth, has asked the class what the next adverb in the text is. Gladys knows the answer. She does every time. She likes English class the best. She is in 5th grade at Paranae School. They have five English books in the class, but they are 13 students. Gladys shares a book with Margreth, Elisabeth and Jackline. She always tries to absorb everything in class. Because Gladys has a plan. She wants to be an English professor. She wants to grow up and become good enough to teach others at a university in Nairobi.

Behind the classrooms is the school kitchen. Here, two adults prepare food for all the children. When one of the students hits the metal bar on the porch, they have a break for lunch. Gladys

rinses her plate and joins the queue. Teacher Ann pours her a large portion of githeri. The girls sit in the shade under a tall tree. Gladys puts cooked beans and corn in her mouth with her fingers. While they eat, they can hear goats bleating and the sound of cowbells as cattle pass by. After lunch, Gladys enjoys the feeling of being full. She wants to run around and play.

Gladys has planted a flame tree with Margreth. A few months ago, a man from Kajiado visited the school and told the students about the importance of trees. The roots of the trees retain the soil so that it does not rain away. All the students were digging holes and planting trees behind the school. Around the trees, they put branches with long thorns on them. They are called "ngonja kidogo" This means "wait a minute," because the branches easily grab your clothes. You should be careful not to tear your school uniform as you walk by. The thorns also keep animals away, so the leaves are not eaten. Gladys and Margreth water their tree every day. After six years, the tree will be taller than the school, standing high with large red-orange flowers and providing shade for the next students to come.



Margreth and Gladys water their tree every morning and afternoon.



When the light disappears, the animals come home

At Gladys' house, they also have a fence of dry thorn branches. They are piled up in long rows all around their two houses. The thorns keep out cows, gazelles, and hyenas. They protect the family and the animals. All day long, grandma's sheep and goats roam freely, eating what they can find. But when the sun goes down, they come back on their own. Gladys and her little brother let them into the enclosure. Behind the thorn branches, it is safe at night.

Gladys does her chores before her mother comes home. She sweeps inside and around the house. Then she takes a big knife and goes outside their fence. In the bush, she chops thorns and small twigs from branches with a machete. She gathers the branches into a bundle on her back. When Gladys returns, she prepares the firewood.

Her mother has fetched water from the well while they were at school. It tastes a little salty. But this is the cleanest water they have. Gladys washes the dishes. She hopes her mother has found work today so they can have dinner. Some days her mother does laundry for families nearby. Other days, she has to walk a long way to find work. It is almost completely dark, and the wind is blowing cold. Gladys' mom comes home with food. The fire from the fireplace in the middle of the hut is warm and fills the hut with smoke. Gladys cuts up potatoes and pours them into the pot with the rice. Today there is food for everyone. While the food





With energy from the sun, water is pumped up into large, black tanks. From here, the water can flow into the hoses for drip irrigation. The women have already harvested onions and corn. Now they have sown watermelon.

is cooking, their mother teaches them an old Masai song about finding the best land with lush grass for the cattle.

Drip irrigation and tin houses

Gladys' mother is learning how to farm. Together with many other women, she tends a field; a shamba, as it is called. Long rows of water hoses drip just enough water for the plants to grow. Not a single drop is wasted. When Gladys' mother has learned everything, she will make a big field at their own houses. She will grow corn, beans, potatoes, and carrots. When the rains come, a lot can grow there. They will live in a new house her mother is building out of sheet metal. She started before the drought came. It took a long time to save up. She still needs more money to afford some walls. Gladys is looking forward to it being finished.

Gladys likes it when she is allowed in the field. She also wants to learn how to sow and harvest. Her mother wants to teach her. But first and foremost, Gladys has to attend school. Gladys' mother has only attended school for two years. She thinks it is important that her children learn to read and do math so that they can choose what they want to do later in life. Gladys wants to be a professor and live in Nairobi. She wants to help her family. And then she hopes to visit Lake Nakuru and see all the flamingos. Pink birds in the thousands sounds beautiful.



360°



Come inside at Gladys' home.

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GLADYS



THIS YEAR THE READING ROCKET BRINGS YOU TO KENYA

Kenya is a beautiful country in East Africa with both savannah and large lakes, lush highlands and dry desert. Kenya is currently experiencing the worst drought in 40 years. It is affecting the poorest people in the country the hardest.

We meet six different children. Maximilla walks through the hot sand every day to fetch water at the pump. Gloria loves mabuyu candy from the baobab tree and wants to become a doctor. In Nairobi, we meet Gift and Rachael. Gift lives on the 4th floor and dreams of becoming a pilot. Rachael loves to sing and is worried about the climate. On the coast of Kenya, Brian fishes to pay for school. Gladys plants trees at her school and has a special plan for her future.

67 million 6-11-year-old children in the world are still not in school. Sustainable Development Goal 4 is about ensuring that everyone has the right to a quality education. This gives children opportunities in life so they can shape their own future.

When you explore the Reading Rocket, you contribute in highlighting the right of all children to a good education. The stories provide perspective and knowledge about the world we share.

Enjoy the Reading Rocket 2024!