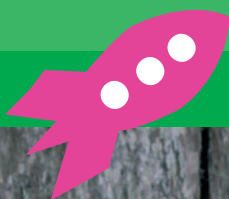


THE WHOLE WORLD IN SCHOOL 2019

THE

READING ROCKET



IN COLOMBIA



Red Barnet



OXFAM IBIS



THE READING

THIS BOOK BELONGS TO:



ROCKET

2019



LEVEL 1

Thaliana lives by the river / **4**

By Heidi Brehm

LEVEL 2

Jennifer and the mine / **16**

By Heidi Brehm



You must learn a thousand things / **22**

By Heidi Brehm

Lucia under lock and key / **68**

By Stine Bang



LEVEL 3

My mother was a soldier / **34**

By Stine Bang

Locked away / **40**

By Heidi Brehm

Band or bandit? / **46**

By Heidi Brehm





THALIANA

Thaliana lives by the river

 HEIDI BREHM  ANDREAS BECK OG HEIDI BREHM

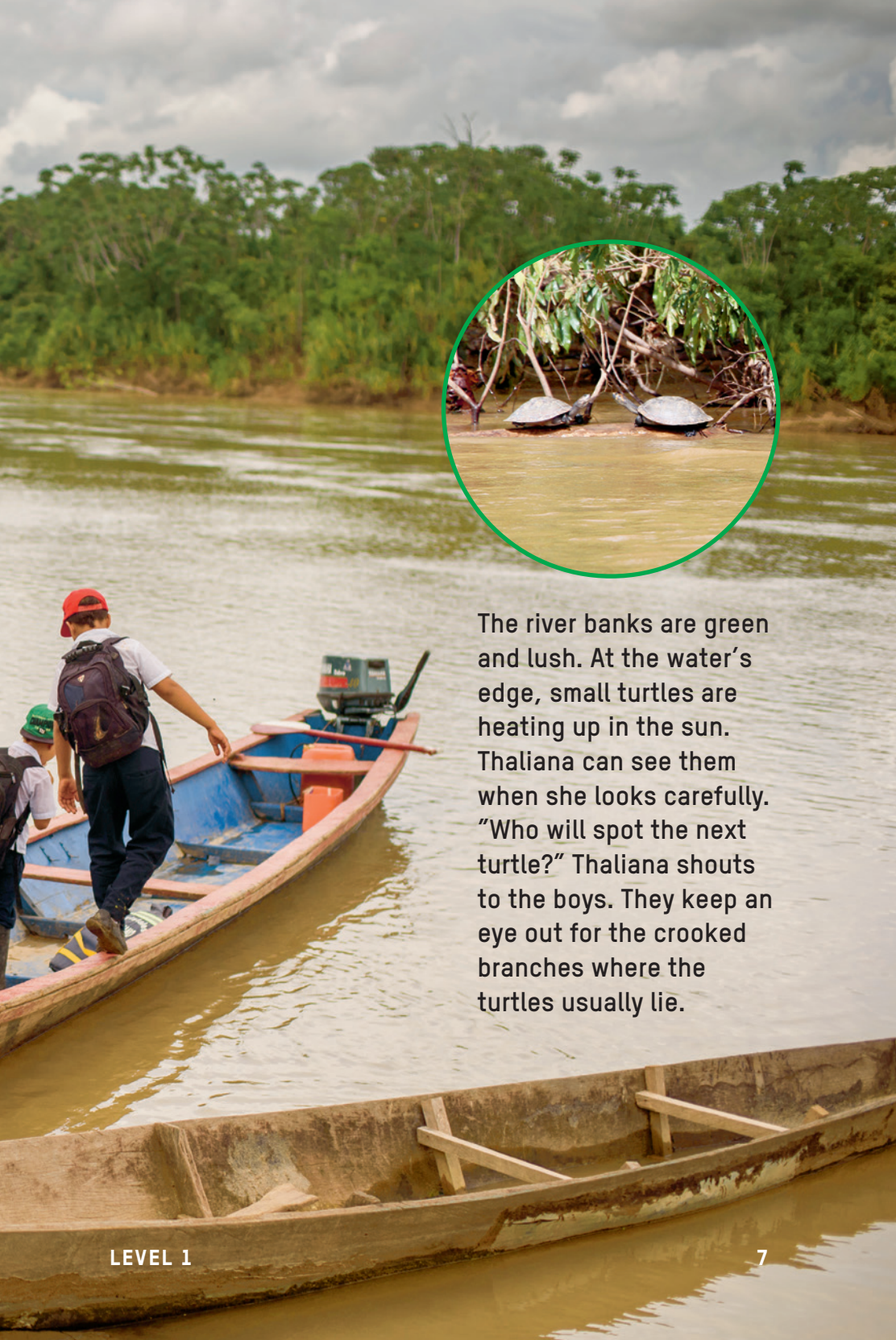
It is early morning. The boat glides through the turbid water, leaving beautiful patterns on the surface. The birds fly quietly along the river bank. Thaliana feels the wind in her hair. She is on her way to school.



Thaliana is 7 years old. She lives by the river Guayabero in the Amazon, which is the world's largest rainforest. There are no roads here, only rivers. People get around by boat.

Thaliana sails to school. A boat comes to pick her up. On the way, they also pick up Esteban, Freddy and Alejandro. There are only four children at Thaliana's school.





The river banks are green and lush. At the water's edge, small turtles are heating up in the sun. Thaliana can see them when she looks carefully. "Who will spot the next turtle?" Thaliana shouts to the boys. They keep an eye out for the crooked branches where the turtles usually lie.






The whole class is sitting at the same table. Although Thaliana is one of the youngest, she is good at writing. She always makes beautiful drawings for her stories. Thaliana's teacher, Luz Aurora, teaches all of their subjects. She also decides when it is time for a break.

Today is a good day. The boys often prefer to play football but today they are up for playing hide and seek. Thaliana hides behind one of the big trees. It takes a while before Alejandro finds her.





When Thaliana returns from school, she does her homework first. Then she helps her father feed the animals.





Thaliana lives with her mother, Dorris, and her father, Gustavo. They take care of the house for a man who lives in the city. They also take care of his animals. There are chickens, horses and cows. Thaliana has given names to the chickens but it can be a little hard to tell them apart. Thaliana loves it when her father has time to go horseback riding. She also thinks it is fun to milk the cow.



Thaliana's mother cooks and takes care of the house. Sometimes Thaliana's father catches fish in the river. Thaliana knows nothing better. The fish will hang over the bonfire. They taste good - and also a little bit of smoke from the fire.





Thaliana plays with her dolls. She plays doctor. She listens to their hearts. The dolls get medicine to cure them. The house is quiet. There are no other children nearby. Thaliana has three older sisters. They are adults now and do not live at home anymore.



The sun sets early in the Amazon. Day and night are of equal length. Thaliana likes it when it darkens. Then she gets to watch television. She watches Doctor McStuffins or Frost. She loves the scene where Elsa builds her ice castle. When Thaliana goes to sleep, she brings the dolls to bed. In the morning, they get up with her.



A few times a month, Thaliana's father sails to town. Thaliana always wants to join. In town, she has a friend. Her name is Juana. Thaliana loves to play with Juana. Time goes too fast when they are together. Thaliana is looking forward to the next time she can play with Juana.



HELEVERDENISKOLE.DK/THALIANA

Join Thaliana for a boat trip and learn about life and the many animals in the Amazon. Learn more about Global Goal 4 and quality education in Colombia.

4 KVALITETS-
UDDANNELSE



A young girl with dark hair, smiling warmly at the camera. She is wearing a bright green long-sleeved shirt with red and yellow trim on the cuffs. Her hands are clasped together on a desk in front of her. The background is a blurred classroom setting with colorful decorations.

JENNIFER

Jennifer and the mine



HEIDI BREHM



ANDREAS BECK OG HEIDI BREHM

It is a very special day. The students at the school in Warranca are going to vote. Jennifer has butterflies in her stomach. She stands up before the rest of the school. "I will fight for the environment. We must do everything we can to protect our nature," she says in a loud and clear voice.

The students must choose a student for the student council. There are several schools in the area. Each school chooses one student for a central student council. Jennifer's school must choose a student to speak on behalf of their school. Jennifer hopes that it will be her. Now she awaits the decision.

Jennifer is 10 years old and in grade 4. She lives in Warranca in northern Colombia with her mother, Anna, and two younger sisters, 3-year-old Lizette and 6-year-old Zuleinis. She also has four older siblings, but they have moved out.

Many other family members live nearby. Her aunt lives in the house next door. Her grandmother lives a few hundred meters further away. After school and homework, Jennifer walks over to her grandmother's house. It is nice to sit in the shade together while the sun is beating down on the roof above them. Jennifer's grandmother is crocheting and telling stories.

Dead fruits and black tomatoes

The area where Jennifer lives belongs to the Wayuu people. They have lived here for many generations. The land is full of coal. Coal miners have dug up coal from the ground for over 50 years. All over

the world, coal is used to make power. The coal is dug from the ground and driven away on large trucks. The mine is constantly expanding. Entire villages have had to move. The mine is now right next to Warranca, and Jennifer and her family may have to find a new place to live too.

The cacti stand tall in the dry sand. It has barely rained although the rainy season is about to end. When it finally rains, the water is black. The pollution from the mine dissolves in the water and covers everything in a black film. The tomatoes turn black. Everything has to be washed thoroughly before it can be eaten.

"When I was a child, fruit grew on the cacti. They tasted amazing." Jennifer loves to hear her grandmother's stories. She talks about how Warranca has changed. Jennifer's grandmother needs the plants that grow in the area. She is a medicine woman and makes medicine out of plants from nature, as the Wayuu people have done for centuries.



Jennifer with her mother and sisters. The ropes on the walls are for the hammocks where the family sleeps at night. Jennifer's mother has made the hammock that Jennifer sleeps in.





When Jennifer returns home, she washes her school uniform to prepare it for the next day. As the oldest child in the house, she has to help with duties.

Throughout her childhood, Jennifer has heard her mother and grandmother discuss the pollution in the area. She hears the adults talk about the contaminated water. She also knows that the air is contaminated. The tiny carbon particles in the air make the children sick. The mine pollutes. Jennifer's family and the others in the village want those who make decisions about the mine to understand that they are destroying the land. The land that the Wayuu people have inhabited for many generations.

The houses in the village are made of clay and dried branches. In the mine, they use dynamite. Jennifer can feel the house shaking when they blast for coal. Jennifer looks at the small cracks in the walls. She also looks at all the waste lying in nature. She knows that something has to be done.

The mayor's congratulations

Jennifer waits anxiously. Will it be her? Her stomach aches from excitement. She hears her name being called out. Her cheeks become warm from joy. "Thank you. I am so happy that you chose me. I will do my best to make everybody at school help each other take care of nature," Jennifer tells the many students gathered for the meeting.



At school, students learn to sort waste. Paper, plastic and other waste should not be mixed. They talk about how they can also sort waste at home.

After the election, Jennifer and her friends talk about how to sort waste and what happens when you throw away waste in nature. She is proud of her new post in the student council. A few days later, the city mayor visits the school. He congratulates Jennifer on the election. "I never thought I would shake the mayor's hand," Jennifer tells her friends with a big smile on her lips. She hopes that the mayor will help them protect nature in Warranca.

The dream of the future

Jennifer's grandmother can see the future in her dreams. She says that dreams have an importance. They can change your life if you listen to them. Jennifer is curious to know more about the future. "What do you think is going to happen to us here in Warranca?" she asks. Jennifer's grandmother makes herself comfortable in the hammock and talks in a serious voice: "El Espiritu, the spirit that protects us and can decide the future, will make something happen. I still do not know what." Jennifer looks at the sky. "Perhaps El Espiritu will make the fruit of the cacti grow again? Maybe El Espiritu will ensure that the rain is not black?" Jennifer's grandmother nods thoughtfully and shrugs. "Yes, maybe."



HELEVERDENISKOLE.DK/JENNIFER

Visit Jennifer, learn about the Wayuu people's traditions and read more about the coal mine Cerrejón. Learn more about Global Goals 1 and 13 on poverty and climate in Colombia.

1

**AFSKAF
FATTIGDOM**



13

**KLIMA-
INDSATS**





ELKIN

You must learn a thousand things

 HEIDI BREHM  ANDREAS BECK OG HEIDI BREHM

The sun is beating down even though it is early morning. Elkin is walking through the dusty streets heading towards school. Every step takes courage. His stomach is rumbling, and the tears are hard to hold back. Elkin is thinking of his old school. There were less children. Elkin had only one teacher. She taught him in all subjects and knew Elkin well. The school was right next to Elkin's house. Everything felt safe at the old school.

Elkin looks into the big schoolyard where hundreds of children are heading for the classrooms. He does not want to enter.

Elkin is 11 years old. He used to live with both his parents and his sister's son, Carlos Andrés, in the countryside. There are only a few schools, and they finish at grade 4. If you want to continue school, you have to move to a bigger city. Five months ago, Elkin, his mother Berenice and Carlos Andrés moved to Macarena so that Elkin could continue school.

The new school

Elkin was nervous about changing school. He cried the first day before he left home. He was afraid to start in a new place that he did not know. In Macarena, there are more teachers and more rules. "In my old school, we came in the clothes we wanted to. Here, in Macarena, we have to wear a uniform. You have to do things in a particular way," Elkin says.

Fortunately, Elkin easily made new friends. The kids at the new school were quick to welcome him. They showed him around the school and told him how everything works. The school still feels huge. Elkin is astounded by the crowd when the whole school comes together for morning gathering. All the students must stand in rows in the schoolyard. They sing the national anthem and receive messages from the teachers.

A world of possibilities

"I want to be a scientist. One who invents things. One who helps change the world." Elkin's eyes light up when he talks about all the things he learns in school. Elkin's teacher has told them about the man who invented penicillin. Elkin believes that he must have saved many lives.



When Elkin gets home from school, he does his homework and plays with his friends. He has made the stilts himself. Elkin practices to go as far as possible.





"We are the generation of peace," reads the inscription on the school wall. Elkin hopes for real peace in Colombia. He would rather not experience the war, as his father and mother did.

The school in Macarena has opened a new world of possibilities. Elkin loves to surf the internet where he learns about many different things. He is curious. "My mom and dad have always said that you have to learn a lot if you want to accomplish things in life. You have to learn a thousand things if you want to make it big," Elkin says with a smile. Whenever he gets to use one of the school's computers, he looks for information online. He reads about inventors, nature and animals.

Elkin's father, Baudelino, has remained in the countryside. He takes care of the house and cultivates the land. Every Friday, he takes the family boat to Macarena where he picks up the family. Then they all go home for the weekend. Elkin enjoys coming home at the weekends. There is no music, noise or traffic. Nevertheless, he always looks forward to going back to Macarena. Back to his friends, school, the internet and the many opportunities of the city.



They have many animals on the farm by the river. Elkin helps when he is home on the weekends. His father teaches him how to take care of nature and the animals.

Elkin's dream

Elkin's mother hopes that he will have better opportunities than she had herself. She knows that if you want to do well, you need to get an education. That is why they chose to move to Macarena, even though it was a big shift for their lives.

School is free up to grade 9 in Colombia. However, families have to pay for their children's school uniforms, books and notepads. Not all parents therefore, can afford to send their children to school. Many children and young people in Colombia never get an education. "If Elkin had been born in another family. If he had had another father, I am sure his dream of becoming a scientist would come true," Elkin's father says in a sad voice. "Colombia is a country with excessive inequality. There is a big gap between rich and poor. We do not have the same possibilities."

Elkin does not know how much longer he can continue going to school. "I do not think too much about politics and Colombia's future. That is something my parents talk about a lot. I think more about whether I can get an education. I would really like to be a scientist."



HELEVERDENISKOLE.DK/ELKIN

Join Elkin at school. He will show you around his house in Macarena and take you sailing to his father's farm. Learn about Global Goals 4 and 10 on quality education and inequality in Colombia.





LUCIA

Lucia under lock and key

 **STINE BANG**  **ANDREAS BECK**

The houses cling to the mountainside along the steep streets. In the middle of it all, there is a small yellow house. Children of all ages are playing in front of the house. A puppy sprints by with its tongue dangling from its mouth. A little boy jumps after it, laughing aloud. In the doorway, their grandmother is watching over them. She is smiling.

Suddenly, the playing comes to an end. The children's grandmother herds everybody into the house, closes the door from the outside, locks it and leaves. Now, the street lies quiet.

Lucia is 9 years old and lives in Colombia's capital, Bogotá. Her grandmother locks up the children when she goes to buy groceries. She does so to protect them.

You should not trust strangers

In Colombia, they say that you cannot take any chances. You should always be on the safe side. Lucia therefore, is not allowed to play outside without adult supervision. Nor can she go home from school on her own. And she never plays with classmates outside school. She does not even know where they live.

Lucia lives alone with her mother and her younger brother. Their mother works in the city and is gone all day. That is why Lucia often stays with her grandmother, who lives nearby. Several of her mother's siblings, who are still children, live at her grandmother's house. They are Lucia's uncles and aunts. Some of them



In Colombia, it is common that several generations of a family live together. Lucia's grandmother takes care of the family's children so that the adults can work and make money. If somebody is in need, they always help each other.

are the same age as Lucia. There are cousins as well. Lucia is playing with all of them.

The neighbourhood that Lucia lives in is poor. There are many criminal gangs selling drugs, also to children. Lucia has been told that children are kidnapped because the bandits will sell their inner organs to rich people.

That is why Lucia's mother has taught her to take care and be sensible. Lucia must not trust strangers, and much less follow a stranger. However, Lucia's mother is still worried. "I cannot protect her from someone passing by in a car, sliding the door aside and covering her head with a black hood to kidnap her."

Locked up, safe at school

Lucia's school is on a mountainside overlooking Bogotá. She is in the classroom colouring a nice pattern. At 11 o'clock, the bell

rings. School is over. No one just leaves on their own. The school gate is locked with a huge padlock, and a guard keeps watch. On one hip he has a walkie-talkie. On the other, a baton. He is ready to intervene if a dangerous situation occurs. Outside the gate, a lot of parents are waiting for the children to be released.

Once, some adolescents gave sweets to the children just outside of the school. However, they were not sweets at all. They were drugs. Since then, the school has taken more precautions.

Now, the guard opens the gate, and the children and parents find each other. Lucia recognises her mother and her little brother in the midst of the crowd. Lucia smiles and runs up the stairs. Up to her mother and a big, warm hug. They walk home through the steep and narrow streets. Lucia is talking about her day. When she is with her mother, the streets feel safe.

Lucia is in grade 4. Normally, her aunt comes to pick her up. Lucia loves the days when her mother is waiting outside the gate.





Lucia enjoys having time with her books. When she is home with her mother, she also has to help. She does the laundry and helps to clean.



And they lived happily ever after

When they get home, Lucia hurries to her books. She prefers fairy tales. The princes and princesses face many dangers, but the fairy tales always have a happy ending. The best one is Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs. She tries to read the books aloud for her little brother, but he is too busy tossing around a big red ball. Lucia laughs at him and tries again, but he does not care.

Beneath the bed, she finds a book. She is writing her own fairy tale about Rosita and the bird, who are best friends and love each other very much. She thinks for a moment and writes: Rosita noticed that the bird was sad and asked it what was wrong. "It is because I do not have a gift for you."

Lucia loves fairy tales. She does not know yet how it will end, but she knows that it will be happily ever after.



HELEVERDENISKOLE.DK/LUCIA

Visit Lucia's school and walk through Bogotá's streets with Lucia and her mother. Learn more about Global Goals 4 and 16 on quality education and peace in Colombia.





**KEILER
STIVEN**

My mother was a soldier

 **STINE BANG**  **ANDREAS BECK**

The jungle is dense, only in a few places do the sun rays reach the ground. The birds in the trees sing kurukukuuuu, kurukukuuuu, as they have done since Jennie walked here for the first time.

She walks behind the others on the trail. She has a gun over her shoulder. She wears a uniform. She no longer fears the snakes, as she did when she first joined the guerrillas. At that time, she was 12 years old. Now she is 19, and walking is getting harder. She is nine months pregnant. It feels like she has to pee, so she asks the others to stop and wait. She is not going to pee however; she has gone into labour and is about to give birth.

They know that one of the government's patrols is close by. If they are discovered, they will have to fight. The group continues without Jennie. She is left in the middle of the jungle among the noise of the insects and the birds' persistent kurukukuuuu. Four guards, a doctor and a nurse stay behind with her. She is in good hands, and the birth is fast.

Suddenly, she lies with the most beautiful little boy in her hands. She looks at him, kisses him and puts him to her chest. But they have to go on. The government soldiers are still close. She whispers to the boy: "Your name is Keiler Stiven." Then she packs him into a military shirt, gets up and starts walking again. After a couple of hours, she collapses. The others put her and Keiler into a hammock and carry them out of the jungle. Out to a farm where they are safe and can recuperate.

Three months pass. Then Jennie's fellow soldiers return. The time has come to give Keiler away. There is no room for young children in the soldier's life in the jungle.

The life without a mother

Keiler Stiven, like many other children in Colombia, grew up without his parents. His mother, Jennie, joined the guerrilla army when she was 12 years old. Her family was very poor, and her father drank too much and was not nice to her. She often met the soldiers from the jungle where she lived, and they were always sweet to her. Therefore, she joined them. Among them she found a new family. The commander, who was the leader of the group, became like a father to her.

Keiler was adopted by his grandmother when his mother left. The two lived alone in the Colombian capital, Bogotá. Keiler did not know who his mother was. He felt abandoned and wondered why his grandmother never talked about his mother. Maybe she was dead? Many thoughts went through Keiler's head. Sometimes his mother came to visit them. But his grandmother never told him who she was. For years, Keiler thought that she was just a friend.

When Keiler was 7 years old, his grandmother told him that the woman who visited every once in a while was his mother. "Even

GUERRILLA IS A SPANISH WORD, PRONOUNCED: GE-RILYA

Guerrilla war is a special type of warfare. Small groups of rebels try to win a war by attacking the state army. The rebel groups do not have enough soldiers to fight an ordinary war. Therefore, they sneak ahead, attack and hide in mountains and jungles.





Keiler is 11 years old and in grade 5. Keiler's mother helps him with homework. She also attends school to catch up on all the years she spent in the jungle. At the moment, she is working hard to get her high school diploma.

though I found out that I had a mother, I felt abandoned," Keiler says. The visits were always short, and Jennie always returned to the jungle again.

The peace

After more than 50 years of civil war, the Colombian government and the rebel group FARC reached a peace agreement. All the guerrilla soldiers came out of the jungle and laid down their weapons. Jennie too. In the beginning, after Jennie had left the jungle, she and Keiler would often talk on the phone, getting to know each other.

Four months later, Keiler finally moved in with his mother. "When I saw her, I just said "mom" and then we hugged each other for a



FARC

In Colombia, the rebel group FARC has fought against the Colombian government for more than 50 years. FARC has fought for poor farmers' right to cultivate and own land. In Colombia, a few rich people own almost all of the land. In order to buy weapons, FARC earns money by kidnapping people and selling drugs. Because of that, many people in Colombia are very angry with FARC, even if they agree that the inequality is too high.

long time. It was a huge hug filled with love. And I cried, and she cried because we were so happy to find each other again."

Now, Keiler and his mother live in a camp with other former soldiers and their children. They have lived here for half a year. They have a tiny house with two rooms. In the camp, both Keiler and his mother can attend school, and Keiler has made many new friends.

The adults are learning not to be soldiers, but they still preserve some rituals from the soldier's life. For example, everyone in the camp eats together in the common house, morning, noon and evening.

"Right after we met again, we talked a lot about what had happened to her and what had happened to me. Now, we live together and do all the things that we could not do for a very long time."

Tomorrow is Mother's Day. One of Keiler's friends drop by and asks if he is on his way. All the children have to practice a dance routine that they will perform for their mothers. Keiler waves at his mother and runs off with his friend.



HELEVERDENISKOLE.DK/KEILER-STIVEN

Learn more about FARC and the peace process, and meet some of the women who have fought for FARC. Read more about Global Goal 16 about peace and justice in Colombia.

16 FRED, RETFÆRDIGHED OG
STÆRKE INSTITUTIONER





YUSETH

Locked away

 **HEIDI BREHM**  **ANDREAS BECK OG HEIDI BREHM**

The rhythmic beat of the drums mixes with voices. Family members and people from the area are talking outside the house. Yuseth is ready in the cabin. For a month, she has been locked away inside her family's house. They have been preparing her for life as a woman. When she walks out the door, she will leave childhood behind and be welcomed into the adult world. Outside, they are waiting to meet her as a woman.

Yuseth often thinks about the time in the family house three years ago. She remembers the confinement, as if it were yesterday.

Away from home

Yuseth is 15 years old. She has two surnames. Hernandez, which is a common last name, and Puana, which is her Wayuu name. Puana shows which Wayuu clan she belongs to. She is from the Alta Guajira area in northern Colombia. The area is one of the poorest in the country. There are only a few real roads, and the villages are scattered over a large area. A village rarely has its own school. Because of the distances, many families choose to let their children live at school. Yuseth has lived at her school for four years. Her mother, father and four siblings live in a small village, two hours' drive away. Yuseth only returns home during holidays and sometimes at the weekend.

Yuseth is one of the most talented students in her school. She gets top marks in almost all subjects and has recently been appointed as assistant. Yuseth is proud of her role. She helps

the teachers. She also helps the smaller children with their homework. If they are sad or miss their family, they will come to Yuseth. She knows how to comfort them. She tells stories that make them forget why they cried.

El Encierro

It is an old tradition for the Wayuu people to mark the transition from child to adulthood. When a boy's voice goes into transition, he must behave like a man. When a girl gets her first period, "El encierro" begins, which means "the confinement".

Yuseth got her first period when she was 12 years old. She was locked away in the family house for a month. During that month, only her mother and grandmother were allowed to see her. Among the Wayuu people, it is a women's task to teach a young girl what growing up implies. Yuseth's mother and grandmother told Yuseth how to behave like a woman. "Women are not fooling around and playing games," her mother said.



75 boys and 105 girls live at the school. The students get up at four o'clock, pack their hammocks and wash themselves. Before eating breakfast, they clean the school.





Virtually all school students belong to the Wayuu people. Most of the teaching takes place in Spanish. They also learn about the Wayuu people's traditions. All girls learn to crochet bags and hammocks.

The confinement is also about preparing the body for life as a woman. A Wayuu woman must protect her body to ensure that she can give birth to children and that she will be a beautiful wife for her future husband. In the first week of the confinement, Yuseth had to lie in a hammock. She could only move when she had to go to the bathroom. It was hot, and her thoughts were flying around in her mind. Yuseth thought about how life would change. Would she never again be laughing and fooling around with her friends when everyone around her expected her to behave like an adult? She had to keep the many questions to herself. "They were in my heart," Yuseth remembers.

During the month that Yuseth was locked away, she had very little to eat. Most of the time, she had to drink chicha, a beverage made of corn and goat milk. It was hard to be hungry all the time.



There is no running water at school. Every afternoon, all students bring their bucket down to a water reservoir. They fill the bucket with water and carry it back to school, where it is ready for the next morning.

Yuseth was also given a drink made of herbs. The drink caused her to throw up, so that the childhood inside her would come out. She also had her hair cut to shoulder length to remove the childhood from her body.

The last night that Yuseth was locked away, she was bathed in cold water. The cold water was meant to clean the last impurities from her. She was looking forward to getting out of the house and feeling the fresh air again. Even before they opened the door, she could hear the drums. Yuseth knew that when she stepped out the door, her life would change.

The best girlfriend

Daryibel is Yuseth's best friend at school. Daryibel is also Wayuu. She is a great support for Yuseth. The two girlfriends often talk about the time when they were locked away. Even though it was three years ago when Yuseth got her first period and was locked away in the family house, it still fills her mind. It feels good to talk to Daryibel. She understands. Yuseth and Daryibel talks about the many do's and don'ts of adult life. They are getting used to it. However, they are not quite done with laughing and fooling around.



HELEVERDENISKOLE.DK/YUSETH

Visit Yuseth's school and learn about Colombia's original people and the Wayuu people's traditions. Learn more about Global Goals 4 and 5 on quality education and gender equality in Colombia.

4 KVALITETS-
UDDANNELSE



5 LIGESTILLING
MELLEM KØNNENE





JULIAN

Band or bandit?

 **HEIDI BREHM**  **ANDREAS BECK**

As the car climbs up into the mountain, the city's busy streets are slowly disappearing behind Julian. Large trees edge the road. The car pulls over at the big gate. Julian is home. He had been visiting his mother in the area where he used to live. Now he is back at school. Back in safe surroundings.

Julian is 12 years old. He comes from a neighbourhood in Bogotá with much violence and crime. There he lived with his mother. His father left the family when Julian was very young. Julian's mother had to manage everything alone. It was difficult for her to provide for Julian. He had to look after himself. "I was always alone. Even though my mother worked hard, I was often hungry," Julian says with a blank look in his eyes. Around three months ago, a group of older boys attacked Julian. Julian's mother reacted fast. She had heard about a school, which helps children and young people who are at risk of being recruited to criminal drug gangs. Fortunately, there was room for Julian.

Free from fear

"One two, and one two three." The band begins to play. The sound of the drums can be heard from far away. It is afternoon. For Julian, it means time to play music. Together with many other students at school, he plays the drums. He will keep the rhythm and make sure it fits with the others in the group. When each student and each drum come together, it all works and feels great. This is the first time Julian has a group of peers, with whom he shares a fun pastime activity.

Before Julian arrived at the school, things were different. When he came home from school, he used to walk the streets of the neighbourhood. Many of the older kids in the area were unpleasant. They took drugs and had weapons. They also tried to lure Julian into taking drugs, and they forced him to carry a "white weapon". White weapons are knives and other sharp objects that can cut. "You had to have one. That is just how it was. That is what everyone did," Julian says. Julian and the other boys from the area hung around in the park. Here, groups of young boys were strolling around. Some tried to earn or steal money. Others just needed to pass the time. Julian did not trust anyone, and he never knew what kind of trouble the other boys were up to.

The contrast to being part of a band at school feels enormous. In the park, it was all about watching out for yourself. He was

The school functions as a very small community. Students learn about democracy and about making joint decisions. Every year, the students chooses a mayor among themselves.





Julian's school is on a mountainside on the outskirts of Bogotá. From the school, you have a good view of the city. The school has a small garden where the students grow vegetables. The vegetables are used for cooking at the school.

alone. In the band, he can give himself up to the rhythm without worrying that anything will happen to him.

A new world

From the school you can look down on Colombia's capital, Bogotá. Down at the thousands of houses, the hustle and bustle. That world is no longer Julian's. The school is green and quiet. In the silence, a horse is strolling around, and a couple of Julian's friends are weeding out the herb garden.

Julian has made many friends at the school. One of them is Yeini. She is 13 years old and comes from a completely different part of Colombia. Yeini, like Julian and the other students, has a rough back-story. Julian and Yeini are both new at school. They have helped each other to get settled. They do not talk too much about their lives before this school. They know that all students have demons from their past. "It is nice not to be alone. Nice to



At the school, the students sleep in dorms. Boys and girls separately. Each dorm room has a student who is responsible for peace and order. Each student has his own bed and half a closet for personal items and clothes.

be around others who look after you and understand you, without needing you to say much,” Julian says while smiling at Yeini.

Julian is happy to stay at the school. He feels safe there. “It is like coming to a whole new world. Before, I felt scared of myself. I was scared of the way I acted. I got into fights and was mean to others. That was just how we did it,” Julian says, throwing up his hands. Although Julian has only been at the school for three months, he has changed. He has learned that you do not solve problems by fighting. But most importantly, he has felt for himself, how happy it makes him when somebody cares about him. And that it feels good to help others too.

Hope for Colombia

Julian has trouble seeing how Colombia can become a country of peace. “It is not easy to be a good person when you are always afraid. Fear makes you do stupid things. I hope there will be real peace in Colombia,” he says.

Julian and Yeini agree that Colombia could learn a lot from the way they live at school. Everyone helps and takes care of each other. There is no difference between people. “Imagine if that could be the future of Colombia,” Julian says thoughtfully.



HELEVERDENISKOLE.DK/JULIAN

Visit Julian's school, listen to Yeini's story and read more about gangs and crime in Bogotá. Learn more about Global Goals 4 and 16 on quality education and peace in Colombia.



THE READING ROCKET 2019

1. edition

© Alinea and Oxfam IBIS

ISBN: 978-87-87804-69-1

Thanks to Alexander Bach, Dorte Nielsen, Rebecca Bach and Nicci Morgan for review and proof reading.

The contents are solely the responsibility of Oxfam IBIS and Alinea and can not in any way be seen as an expression of donor or sponsor views.

The Reading Rocket 2019 is published in collaboration with Red Barnet and with support from Alinea.

Editing

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Photography

Andreas Beck, Anna Kari, Anna Pantelia, Heidi Brehm, Bertil Suadiciani, Line Ellen Krabek, Line Agerlin Trolle, Louise Dyring Mbae, Minzayar OoPanos, Nesma Ainsour and William Vest-Lillesø.

Cover photo: Heidi Brehm

Short stories

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Illustrators: Jenz Koudahl, Peter Snejbjerg and Inge Rand

Layout

Peter Waldorph

Print

Nørhaven Paperback A/S

Printed in Denmark

Distribution

OXFAM IBIS

Vesterbrogade 2B

1620 København V.

Tlf.: 3535 8788

www.oxfamibis.dk

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