



**'You
can
help.'**

My Life is a Story

Lauren Child for UNESCO

www.mylifeisastory.org



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Programme for the Education
of Children in Need

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1.

My Life Is A Story – A UNESCO Partnership for Children

The UNESCO Programme for the Education of Children in Need works to provide education and a better future for some of the most dispossessed children in the world. Behind the terrifying scale of the statistics that shroud these children: (29,000 under the age of five die every day; 146 million regularly go hungry; 640 million lack adequate shelter; 250 million work as cheap labour and 72 million are out-of-school) lie very real and individual lives. These are children who are still, today, often facing life alone or broken, abandoned by society and even their families.

UNESCO fervently believes that education is one of the few routes left to address this disastrous situation both in the developing world and in deprived pockets of industrialised countries. Simply cramming children into overcrowded schools or implementing ill-adapted education, however, is not the solution. What are needed are inventive approaches that use all routes to education. This means education that calls upon dance, sports, music, theatre, arts or culture as much as reading and writing; an open-minded and innovative perspective on learning.

The UNESCO Programme for the Education of Children in Need operates, therefore, by forging alliances with pioneering projects across the world. Since 1992, alliances with over 330 groundbreaking projects in 92 countries have helped countless street children, child prostitutes, boy soldiers, working children, young refugees and child victims of illness, conflict and natural disasters. Thanks to such schemes UNESCO supports the most oppressed of children, but also demonstrates what is possible with goodwill and imagination and how it can be replicated.

A common feature of marginalised children across the globe is that they have no voice and no platform to express their difficult lives or grievances. The written word, sometimes even the spoken word, is a privilege beyond their reach. Many have never had a book read to them by an adult or read a book themselves, let alone an illustrated book. The idea of telling a story, even their own life story, is not part of their reality. Yet their childhood would be greatly empowered by education in the form of literacy, writing, storytelling and drawing.

It is with great anticipation then that UNESCO is signing a new partnership with world-renowned children's author, Lauren Child, and celebrated publisher, Hachette Children's Books, to fundraise for deprived children and raise awareness of their plight. It is a unique partnership for UNESCO that is set to explore new ways of transforming the lives of excluded children through books, reading, writing, storytelling and illustration.

The partnership is to take two forms. The first with the sale and promotion of a revamped and lengthened UNESCO version of Lauren Child's much-loved and award-winning book, *That Pesky Rat* (to be published in June 2008), with both author royalties and publisher profits going to UNESCO. The second with a campaign entitled, *My Life is A Story*, to gather and publicise the unheeded and hidden life stories (and/or illustrations) of children around the world.



Bolivia (Photograph © UNESCO).

2.

Lauren Child



Lauren Child is one of the most talented, celebrated and original children's author/illustrators living today. She burst onto the world stage in 1999 with two picture books, *I Want a Pet* and *Clarice Bean – That's Me*. These hilarious and original books were an instant hit with the public. In 2000, Lauren Child won the prestigious Kate Greenaway Medal for *I Will Not Ever Never Eat a Tomato*. Numerous other awards followed with new books, each one a run-away success with children and parents alike. Lauren Child's books are now sold in their millions worldwide, in thirty languages, from Danish to Chinese, Catalan and Thai. Lauren Child was selected to showcase the best of British illustration and writing in an exhibition at the British Library. This exhibition now tours with the British Council worldwide. She was chosen in 2002 to be the artist to represent World Book Day. A new show of Lauren Child's work is set to open in 2008 at the eminent Manchester Gallery in the United Kingdom. It is due to tour the country, gathering thousands of families at each venue.

October 2005 saw the UK launch of a 52-part animated series, *Charlie and Lola*, on the BBC, based on Lauren Child's books and produced by Tiger Aspect. This has become one of the most popular series on television and picked up many awards across the world, including two British Academy of Film and Television Arts Awards (BAFTAs) making Lauren Child a household name. The *Charlie and Lola* TV series is now aired in 34 countries.

Lauren Child was particularly moved by the diversity and impact of the original schemes used to help children within UNESCO's Programme for the Education of Children in Need. A programme that gave free rein to children's artistic and cultural talents as a way to implementing education naturally struck a rich chord with her.

Lauren Child is acutely aware that many children around the globe will not get the chance to read books or be able to explore the wonders of imaginative storytelling to the full if they remain in abject poverty. Children's books, at their best, such as Lauren Child's works, are all about learning and discovering the extraordinary power of words. In industrialised countries, or wealthier communities across the world, story books are part and parcel of bringing up a child, introducing literacy, sharing a culture and passing down important messages. For deprived children, however, they barely figure.

Rather than just being the preserve of children in wealthy countries, story books could be used to reach out to under-privileged youngsters everywhere. It was this daring idea that convinced Lauren Child and the publisher, Hachette Children's Books, to team up with UNESCO. It is an exceptional agreement, an opening up of the children's book trade to the furthest and most destitute corners of the world where the power of books is still only a dream.



Lauren Child (Photograph © Polly Borland).

A red signature of Lauren Child, featuring a stylized dragonfly icon above the letter 'i' in 'Child'.

3.

Hachette Children's Books

Hachette Children's Books are proud to be supporting both Lauren Child and UNESCO's My Life is a Story campaign by donating all profits from the sale of the new edition of *That Pesky Rat* for a three year term. Hachette published Lauren Child's first picture book, *Clarice Bean, That's Me*, under the Orchard Books imprint in 1999 and have continued to publish her work under both Orchard Books and Hodder Children's Books imprints - (for a full listing of titles see below).



Hachette Children's Books is part of the Hachette Livre UK Group, one of the largest and perhaps most diversified book publishers in the UK. Hachette Children's Books, a new division within this group, formed in 2005 following the acquisition by Hachette of Hodder Headline Ltd. The company ranks number one in the school library market and number two in the trade market.

Hachette Children's Books has four imprints: Franklin Watts, Hodder Children's Books, Orchard Books and Wayland. Together they form a dynamic and highly-prominent list of quality picture books, fiction and non-fiction and between them publish many of the most respected books in children's publishing.

The non-fiction imprints, Franklin Watts and Wayland publish nearly 800 new information books each year on topics ranging from literacy development, science and technology and geography to history, religion and sport. This educational collection of non-fiction books is well-suited to teaching within schools as well as pupil work at home.

Orchard Books is an original, award-winning and innovative publisher of fiction books for children of all ages. Now in its twenty-second year, Orchard Books continues to produce must-have books for every child's bookshelf. As well as *Charlie and Lola* and *Clarice Bean*, Orchard Books are the proud publishers of the highly-popular Rainbow Magic books.

Hodder Children's Books is home to a cross-section of respected and prize-winning writers and illustrators, and to some of the brightest new talents in fiction for children and young adults. In 1942, Enid Blyton's *Famous Five* books were first published and her books continue to be a huge brand for Hodder Children's. Authors from Hilary McKay to David Almond and Cressida Cowell, artists from David Melling to Lauren Child, sit side-by-side on a list that is simply unparalleled.

Lauren Child – Timeline of Publishing and Major Awards



1999

Clarice Bean, That's Me (Orchard Books)
Kate Greenaway Medal Highly Commended
Nestlé Smarties Book Prize Bronze Award

2003

I Am TOO Absolutely Small for School
(Orchard Books)

2000

My Uncle is a Hunkle (Orchard Books)

I Will Not Ever NEVER Eat a Tomato
(Orchard Books) *Kate Greenaway Medal Winner*

2004

Hubert Horatio Bartle Bobton-Trent
(Hodder Children's Books)

Beware of the Storybook Wolves
(Hodder Children's Books)
Kate Greenaway Medal Shortlist
Nestlé Smarties Book Prize Bronze Award

Clarice Bean Spells Trouble (Orchard Books)
British Book Awards Shortlist
Red House Children's Book Award Shortlist

2001

I Am NOT Sleepy and Will NOT Go To Bed
(Orchard Books) *British Book Awards Shortlist*

2006

Clarice Bean Don't Look Now (Orchard Books)

What Planet Are You From Clarice Bean?
(Orchard Books)
Nestlé Smarties Book Prize Bronze Award

Beware of the Storybook Wolves Pop-Up
(Hodder Children's Books)

My Dream Bed (Hodder Children's Books)

2007

I Will Not Ever NEVER Eat a Tomato Pop-Up
(Orchard Books)

2002

Utterly Me, Clarice Bean (Orchard Books)

Charlie and Lola's Animals, Colours, Numbers, Opposites (Orchard Books)

That Pesky Rat (Orchard Books)
Nestlé Smarties Book Prize Gold Award
Kate Greenaway Medal Highly Commended

2008

Charlie and Lola's Shapes, Things (Orchard Books)

Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Book
(Hodder Children's Books)
Kate Greenaway Medal Shortlist

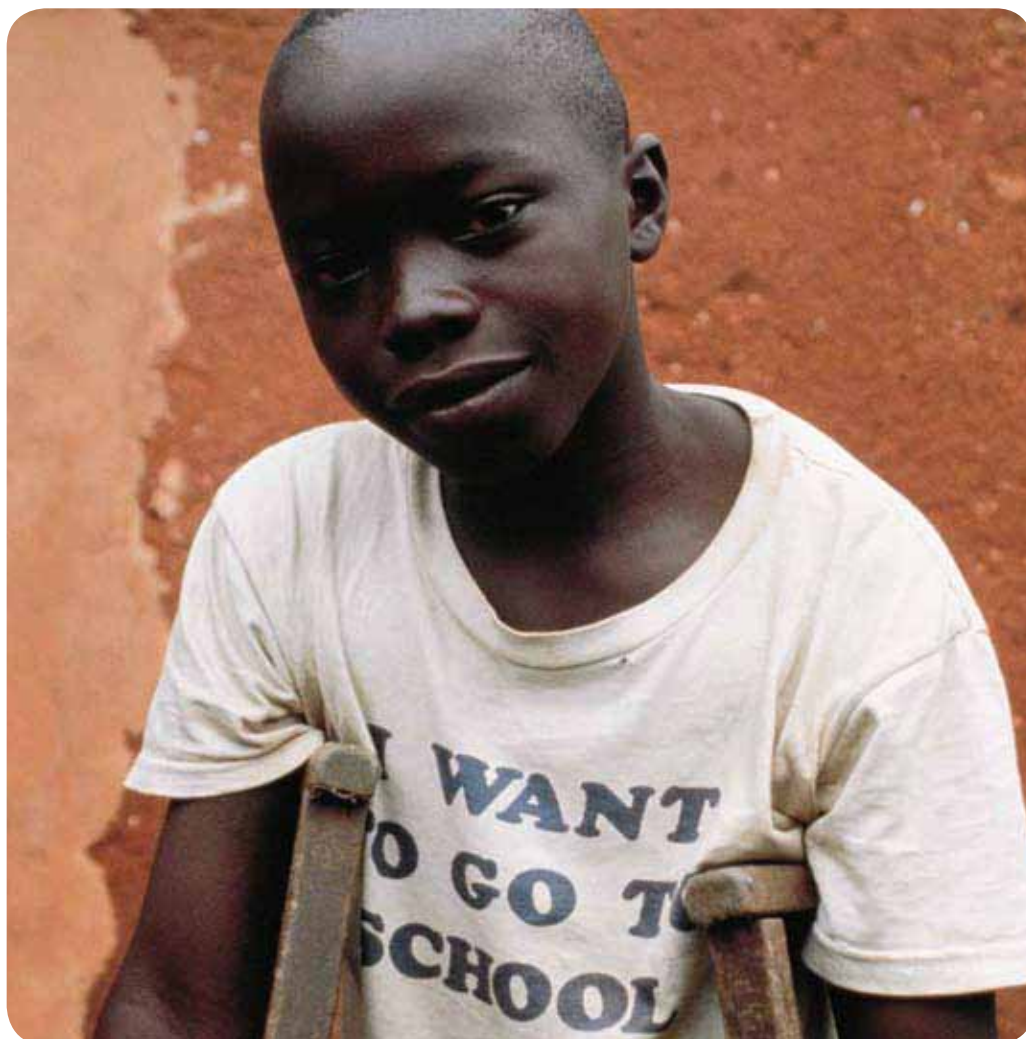
Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Book Pop-Up
(Hodder Children's Books)

I Am NOT Sleepy and Will NOT Go To Bed Pop-Up
(Orchard Books)

4.

UNESCO Programme for the Education of Children in Need

UNESCO's Programme for the Education of Children in Need is exclusively funded by extra-budgetary sources. Since 1992, over US \$34 million has been raised to support grassroots projects for children. The range of projects supported varies enormously. Some are for children who have been left to fend for themselves on city streets. Others are designed for children who are forcibly enrolled into armies. Others still help children who are made to work for pitiable wages or sold into sexual slavery. Certain priority groups though form the main focus of UNESCO's Programme for the Education of Children in Need:



Sierra Leone (Photograph © UNHCR/B.Neeleman).



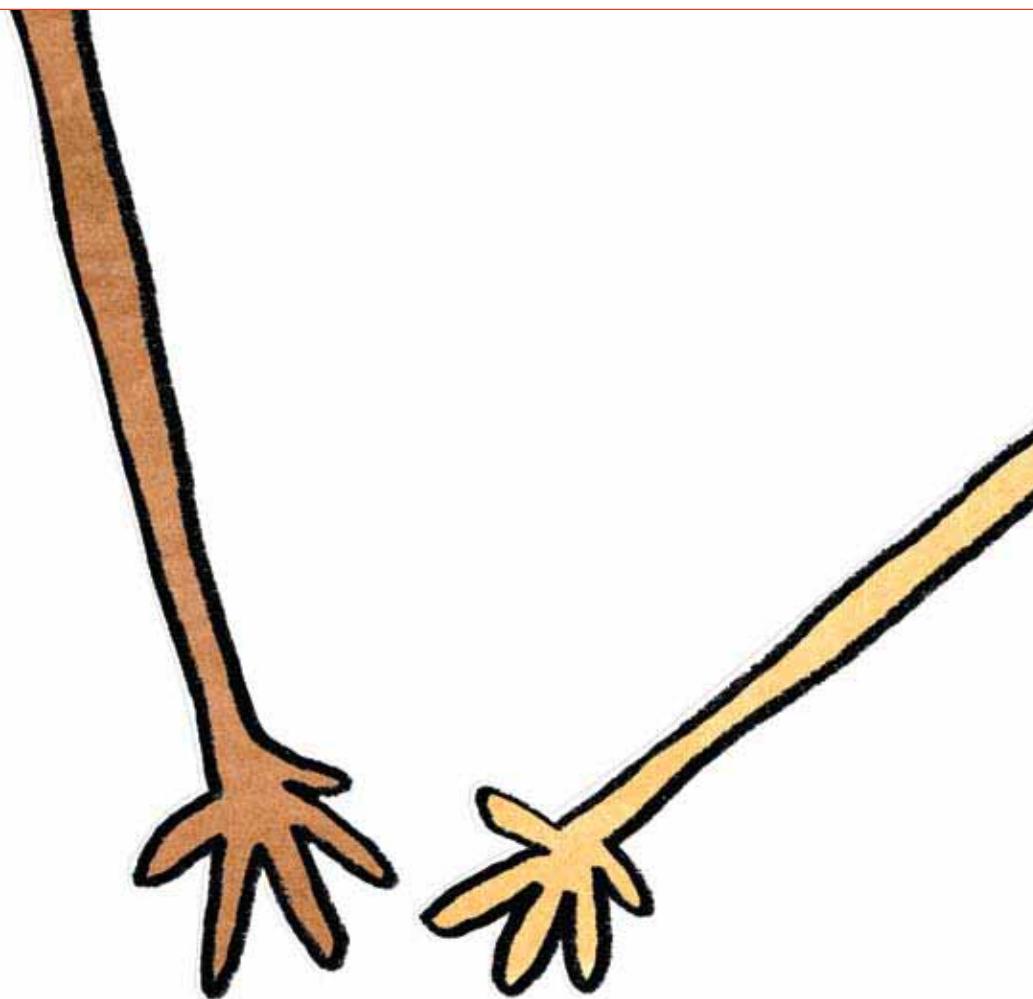
Above left: Nicaragua (Photograph © UNICEF/A.Holbrook). Above right: Colombia (Photograph © UNICEF/P. Taçon).

Street and slum children:

Chased from home by violence, the death of a parent, family breakdown, war, natural disaster or simply socio-economic collapse, many destitute children are forced to eke out a living on the streets, scavenging and foraging in the slums and polluted cities of the developing world. To give a few small recent examples: UNESCO has supported and helped set up street corner schools in Senegal, emergency shelters and urban gardening allotments in the Democratic Republic of Congo, mobile care units in Egypt, vocational centres in Bolivia and educational schemes using circus skills for slum children in Mexico City. Dance and ballet are used to get children off the streets and into learning centres in Brazil. Education facilities now exist for vagrant children in Kabul, Afghanistan. Street training programmes are up and running in Thailand, the Philippines, Romania, Guatemala, South Africa and Argentina.

Child Soldiers and young victims of conflict and natural disasters:

Over the last decade alone, armed conflict has claimed the lives of over 2 million children. Another six million have been left wounded or disabled for life. One million have become orphans. It is estimated today that more than 300,000 children have been enrolled in militia groups and armies and forced to carry a gun. Half of those they kill are other children. In Liberia, UNESCO uses sports to help such children reintegrate their communities and in Lebanon counselling is now available in schools for trauma victims. Curricula reforms and summer camps have been set up for Chechen children. Schools have been built for those hit by the Tsunami in India and Sri Lanka. House-building projects with linked educational programmes have been set up in Pakistan following the earthquake of 2005.



Children with disabilities:

Despite governments signing up to many a convention and seemingly supporting international guidelines on children with disabilities, prejudices and exclusion still form part of everyday life for many children with disabilities around the world. UNESCO helped bring about summer camps for children with cancer in Russia, and a new mobile therapy unit was made operational. Modern surgical clinics were funded in Ukraine for burns victims. AIDS orphans in Lesotho were given special learning assistance, as were HIV-positive children in China. Deaf children in Thailand and disabled children in Colombia were integrated into inventive educational programmes.

Working children:

Exposed to hazardous materials, working in servitude, many of these children die an early death. The most destructive of child 'work' is prostitution. It is reckoned that, worldwide, around 2 million children are involved in this activity. In Asia alone, perhaps more than 1 million minors, of both sexes, work in bars and brothels. UNESCO supports programmes for HIV-infected children in Thailand and El Salvador. In India it provides medicine and school equipment for children involved in carpet-weaving workshops. Children working as garbage pickers in Brazil and Egypt have received education that ties in with their income-generating and waste-recycling activities.

5.

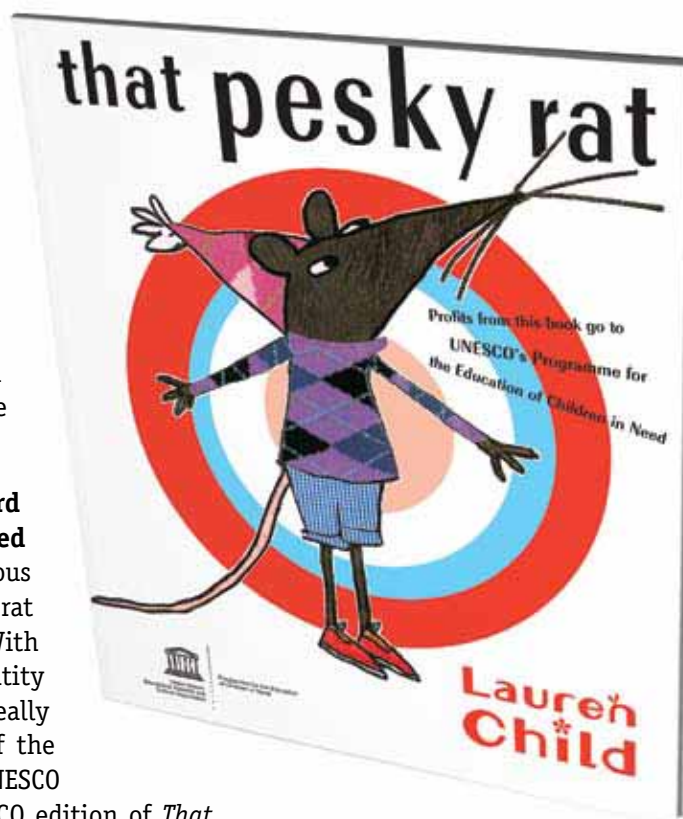
That Pesky Rat

As of June 2008, and for a period of three years, Lauren Child's book, *That Pesky Rat*, is going on sale in bookshops and retail outlets across the United Kingdom with combined profits from both author and publisher given over to UNESCO's Programme for the Education of Children in Need.

Winner of the 2002 Gold Smarties Award for the best children's book in the United Kingdom, *That Pesky Rat* is the hilarious and highly-compelling story of a street rat frantically searching for a decent home. With its themes of homeless and belonging, identity and discrimination, it is a book that is ideally suited to introducing children to some of the world's pressing issues, and several UNESCO themes along the way. Through the UNESCO edition of *That Pesky Rat*, street children in the slums of Mexico City and children in cosy schools of London will connect around a common story and theme, understanding their mutual humanity and each others lives.

Lauren Child has revisited the story of *That Pesky Rat* with an introduction explaining her commitment to UNESCO and, above all, adding a whole new set of pages with descriptions of UNESCO-backed projects and real stories from the field. Thanks to Hachette Children's Books invaluable help in redesigning and re-jacketing the story book is now a wonderful funding and awareness-raising instrument for UNESCO. It is hoped that many of Lauren Child's foreign publishers will also take on the renewed version of *That Pesky Rat* in their countries, spreading the message far afield. With Lauren Child's international profile, the UNESCO Programme for the Education of Children in Need has the chance of spreading and communicating its experiences to a whole new generation of children worldwide.

In addition to sales and promotion of *That Pesky Rat*, bookshops and schools in the United Kingdom are poised to use the book in stimulating classroom debate and enhancing curriculum work. Workshops on the book are envisaged in primary schools and Pesky-based activities are currently being planned. Teacher notes have been designed. School lecture tours and bookshop events are scheduled. The Lauren Child exhibition touring Britain contains a whole walk-in set from *That Pesky Rat* and a panel explaining the character's new commitment to UNESCO's cause.



6.

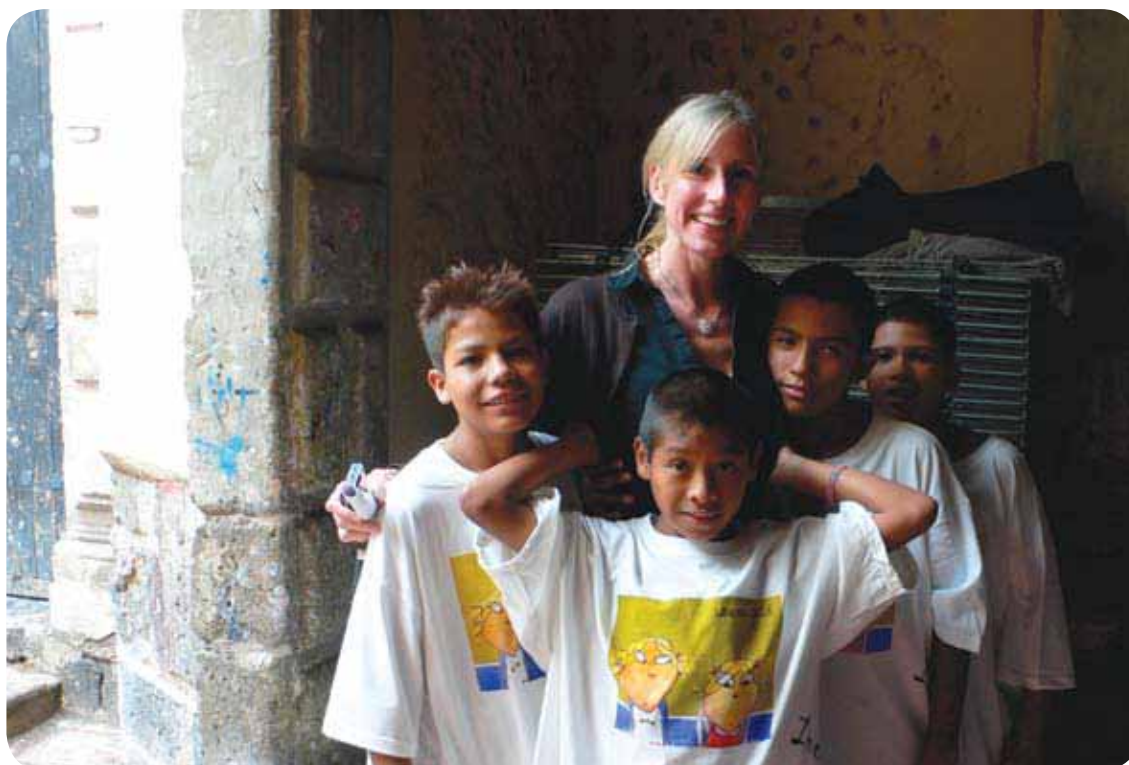


Lauren Child in Mexico for UNESCO

Funds generated from the sale of Lauren Child's *That Pesky Rat* will go towards an array of projects for disadvantaged children. One such project is the UNESCO-supported Renacimiento centre for street children in Mexico City which was visited by Lauren Child. The author's visit was a highlight for many of the children at the shelter who enjoyed spending time drawing images of Charlie and Lola and discussing books such as *That Pesky Rat*. Their comments on the story form much of the basis of the newly-written pages.

Renacimiento works on the understanding that children from the street have to accept basic rules of discipline, no drugs, mutual respect and non-violence to enter the shelter. They are then offered a stage-by-stage programme of education and vocational training. Hygiene, literacy, re-socialisation and the development of a structured life-project are all part of this. Children are prepared to lead independent lives, if possible to reconnect with their families and enter mainstream schooling. The shelter offers workshops in printmaking, bakery, computing, carpentry and welding. Sports are a vital component of the shelter's work.

Lauren Child at the Renacimiento street shelter in Mexico City (Photograph © Françoise Pinzon Gil).





Many of the street children who come to the Renacimiento shelter are fleeing horrific violence, trauma and abuse. Life on the streets of Mexico City is tough. Life expectancy for children who stay on the streets is low.

Renacimiento as well as providing sleeping facilities for over 70 children also has a large outreach programme for hundreds of children who drop into the shelter during the day. They get meals and are able to access counselling, medical care and classes. The shelter becomes a family and home for many children; a place where they can share their pains and hopes with other people for the first time.

The sleeping facilities at the Renacimiento shelter are very basic and overcrowded. There is very poor lighting, the mattresses are over-used and the beds are crammed together with no privacy for the children. Children often have to sleep without sheets or blankets as there are not enough to go round. Educational equipment in the workshops is in desperate shortage. Food for providing meals is a constant concern. The children require proper nutrition and vocational training if their education is to be a success. Money raised through the Lauren Child/Hachette partnership is to address these key problem areas and provide children with a much-needed 'second chance' in life. It will also enable the shelter to take more children into its care, particularly at night.

'You can help.'



7. Life stories of some of the UNESCO-supported children from the My Life is a Story Campaign

My Life Is A Story is the title of the campaign to be spearheaded by Lauren Child to gather the unheard life stories of children in deprived areas of the world. The stories will be written or dictated as answers to questions asked about age, family, aspirations and background, etc. By giving people the opportunity to look extreme poverty in the face, in the form of vibrant stories as told by children themselves, Lauren Child and UNESCO are hoping that children everywhere will come to realise their common destiny and increasing interconnectedness as humans. **My Life Is A Story** will reveal powerfully how we each live our differences, aspirations and everyday issues on the same planet. The campaign should also raise much-needed support for education projects.

The initial campaign is to focus on the life stories of children within projects supported by UNESCO's Programme for the Education of Children in Need, later linking into other communities of children, especially in Britain. It is expected, particularly, that schools will employ the campaign to get their pupils writing and reading on the subject of other cultures, societies and global issues. The stories coming in from around the world will be selected and gathered on a website: www.mylifeisastory.org



www.mylifeisastory.org

Kandina Nambahu, Namibia

My name is Kandina Nambahu. I think I am about 12 years, but no one knows my real birth date. I am from the Ohangwena Region in Northern Namibia and am the last born of a family of eight children. We are from the San people. As in most families here, three of my brothers died before they reached 5 years of age. We used to walk to get fruits, but most of the forests have been fenced off now for farming. Some people here have to beg for food. This woman offered to take me to a town to feed and clothe me, but she just made me look after her house and her small children. I became ill with skin rashes, but eventually I managed to get away and be reunited with my parents.

Kandina is part of UNESCO Namibia's innovative scheme to provide effective education from early childhood to adolescence to children from the deprived San minority group who live in remote rural areas of the country. As well as providing actual school buildings, the scheme introduces the San to basic education and skills that will enable them to address their relationship with mainstream society.



Photos © UNESCO/Windhoeck; UNESCO/Beijing.

Nan Nan, Fuyang, China

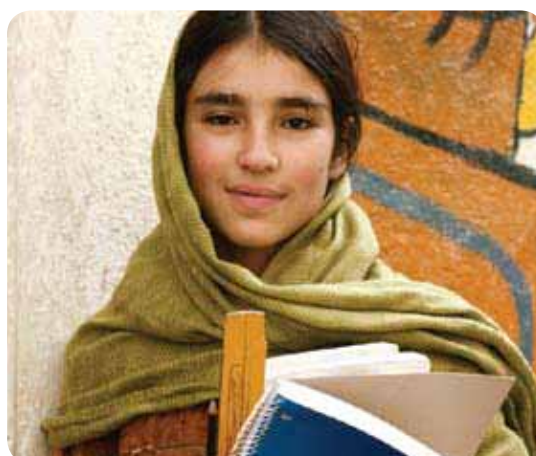
My name is Nan nan and I am sixteen years old this year. My parents died of AIDS when I was nine. I have two elder sisters. One sister was married at the time, but she was banned from seeing me because I am an HIV-infected child. I had to live with my other sister who was fifteen years old. She couldn't find work because she not been to school much. My uncle and aunt also didn't want to adopt us because of my sickness. I met Zhang Ying when I was very sad. Zhang Ying runs the Fuyang AIDS Orphan Salvation Association supported by UNESCO. Now, I go to school with my friends everyday. I learn music and drawing from a college student. I want to be an artist. I want to draw all the beautiful landscape and things. I want to help other children like me because there are too many of us.

The province of Fuyang in Northwest Anhui Province China was severely hit by the sale of contaminated blood in the mid-1990s. Unaware of their own infections, men passed HIV to their spouses and children. Many villagers, often both members of the same family, are now dying or dead. Nan Nan is one of the children who was left behind, but her life is changing thanks to education from the Fuyang Aids Orphan Association in partnership with UNESCO.

Jesus, Mexico City, Mexico

My name is Jesús. I ran away from home when I was 13, and now I live in Mexico City. I am the third of five brothers and sisters. We used to live together in Valle de Bravo. My mum worked as a maid. I used to work at night for a club, sweeping the pavements and watching people's cars. My eldest brother went to the United States. I split from home because the police were after me. They thought I had robbed 4500 pesos. I did not steal that money. I went to Toluca where a friend helped me. One day I wanted to go to the place where I was staying, so I took a bus. I fell asleep and when I woke up I was lost. Somebody picked me up off the streets and took me to a shelter. I like it there. I miss my mum; it has been a year that I don't see her. Someday I want to go back.

In Mexico City, UNESCO works closely with the street shelter and education centre, Fundacion Renacimiento, to provide education, food and sleeping facilities for street children. Children in the centre, such as Jesus, can learn a variety of vocational skills for future employment. Jesus is particularly good at printmaking and metalwork.



Photos © UNESCO/Mexico City; Afghanistan Demain.

Gulafrez, Kabul, Afghanistan.

I'd never been to school before. I'm really happy to be here, learning to read. Reading means you discover lots of things. I'm the youngest in my family. I have three brothers and just as many sisters. Four of them are married. None of them have ever been to school so they are happy for me. I've always helped my brothers find plastic in the streets, to resell it where we can. We also use it to burn and make fires. As my father died during the war, my mother works cleaning people's clothes and houses. When school is over I go home and help her deliver clean clothes back to people's houses. I don't want to leave my country. I want to be a doctor. I've now got friends I never had before. We play together, boys and girls, but in class we are separate, which I prefer. I love the books at school, the ones that tell stories.

Said and Gulafrez are part of the 'Afghanistan Demain' project run with by a local NGO in partnership with UNESCO. The situation for vagrant children in Kabul is dramatic, with up to 40,000 children on the streets. This groundbreaking project allows children from totally disadvantaged and destitute families to enter into care tailored to their needs. In the day centre in the Qalei Wakil neighbourhood of Kabul, children can have access to medicine, warm clothes and education.

Photo © Concordia.



Mariana Besna, Romania

I am Mariana and I am 7 years old. I learn to read and write but I haven't learned so much until now because I am only in the first grade. I like to read because I learn a lot of things. My favorite story is the one about "Cinderella" who had a bad mother who always wanted her to clean. One day Cinderella went to a ball where she saw other girls who did not have bad mothers like her. I don't remember the end of the story. I also like the story of Pinocchio. He was a liar and his nose was getting long. Then he listened to a boy who took him to the disco and to toyland. And then they were swallowed by the big bad whale where his father was. They came out together but his father was dead, and then Pinocchio promised he will never lie again, and since then he never lied. My favourite toy is my Barbie Nicoleta. I like to play with Nicoleta and Nicoleta likes to play with me too. We play together and we go to the Tineretului Park, we also buy something to eat there.

At school I play with Nicolae and Livia who are my best friends. I'm in this centre for 3 years because my mother was working too much and she could not take care of me. My mother looks like me, she has the same black eyes and hair. I have a younger brother who is also in this centre, he is 5 years old. Before I arrived here we lived near Bucharest in a block. Now I don't know where my mother is. My father died when I was little and I don't remember anything about him. When I grow up I want to be a doctor because I can help people. I want to cure children and animals. I have to study a lot, also at the high school, but this is not a problem because I like school!

Many children who are forced to survive on the streets of Romania's cities don't have official papers or an official identity. This can seriously complicate their integration into society and hamper their entrance into much-needed education systems. UNESCO, with the local NGO Concordia, ran a successful programme to get children recognised officially while introducing them to innovative education approaches.