The Small Sparrow Hero by Huang Yun-Hung

Illustrations by Celia Tian

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The Small Sparrow Hero

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This book is printed on recycled paper, using sustainable and low-carbon printing methods.

The Small Sparrow Hero



by Huang Yun-Hung

Illustrations by Celia Tian

foreword



The Environmental Quality Protection Foundation was established in 1984 as the premier non-profit organization focusing on major global environmental issues based in Taiwan. Our main tasks include tree planting, environmental education and international participation.

We understand and welcome the young generation to lead the future we want. In the cli-

mate change era, we will have adapt to difficulties together with the contribution and efforts from the children. I am so glad to take part in the Voices of Future Generations (VoFG) book series since 2015 to promote the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child for its 25th anniversary and the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

We take a more challenging path to open the door to public and invite children from age 8-12 to write down their environmental stories and speak out their voices in respect to sustainable development. It is not easy to have a "qualified" story, as always. We never give up. We went to an elementary school to share the ideas of VoFG and held a Ted Talk-like forum, which is named TEED in Taipei. The result is better than we expected. Now, we are still on the way to accompany the children to speak their stories. Yun-Hung's story is part of the result. He shared his story at the Taipei International Book Exhibition 2018, which was very successful.

— Dr. Ying-Shih Hsieh Chairman, Environmental Quality Protection Foundation, Taiwan

preface



German poet Rilke once said: "the world exists nowhere but within our interpretation." What a great idea! It means that the world we are living in is not only what it looks like, but depends on how we face it and interpret it.

Today, if we think of ourselves as small and weak, then the world will have nothing to do with us because of our lack of confidence.

We can do nothing but let the world get worse and worse, and blame each other. However, if we believe the world will move toward a better tomorrow, then we will make more efforts to shape a better future. With our belief and endeavor, the future of the world will surely have a bright vision ahead.

Huang Yun-Hung's work, *The Small Sparrow Hero*, brings us a beautiful environmental vision through a concrete depiction of Taiwan's valuable natural ecological guest. The sparrow and child are both vulnerable groups in the real world. However, as long as they maintain a firm willingness to raise people's awareness about protecting nature, there will always be an opportunity to connect to more people, by education and community activities, to make nature become part of our living environment. Through this wonderful story, we know that it's not only adults' responsibility to foster co-prosperity with nature—children can also create infinite possibilities for their future.

— Hui-Chien Ku Assistant Professor of National Taiwan Normal University and Writer



Ruei-Ruei the sparrow hurried into the lush woods to hide. He was scared, nervous and trembling, as if he had seen some vicious evil. Mother Sparrow came flying over to him with a weevil in her mouth. She asked, "Ruei-Ruei, what's the matter with you?" Ruei-Ruei saw his mother and cried aloud, "Mother, it's so horrible! While I was eating a worm, I saw a Starling that I hadn't seen for a long time. I was trying to say hello to him, but he turned out to be furious and flew towards me to attack! Luckily I was able to dodge the trouble since I managed to fly away and hide in our home." "Waa, Waaaa! Why did the Starling become so violent?" Mother Sparrow asked before she swallowed the weevil. She continued to question Ruei-Ruei, "Are you sure it was a Starling? Was his mouth yellow or a bit white?" "I don't know!" exclaimed Ruei-Ruei.



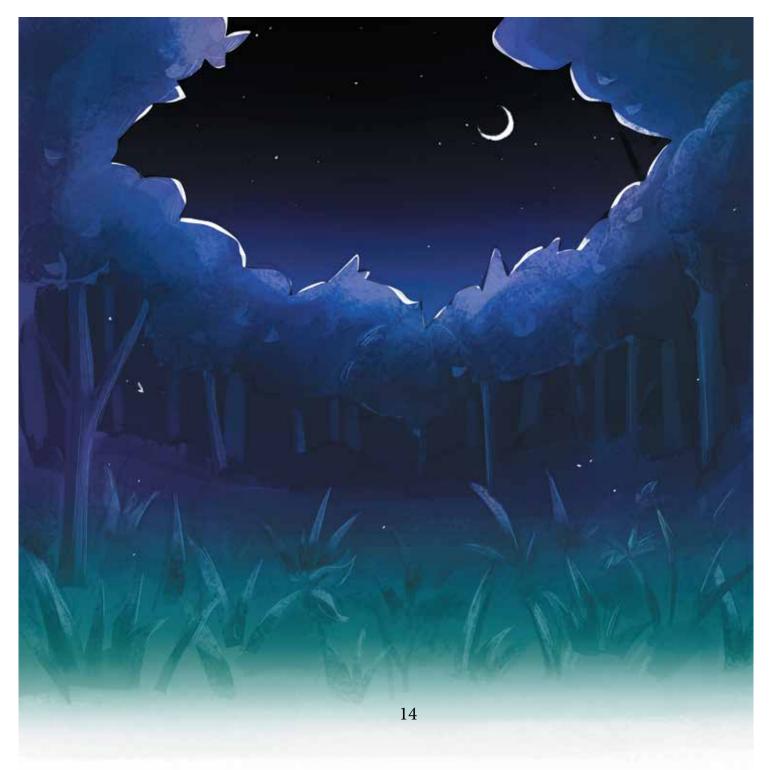


Mother Sparrow hugged Ruei-Ruei and said "You have to be careful, the Starling with a yellow mouth is a Javan Myna, while the one whose eyes are yellow circles is a Common Myna. We can't afford to bother these foreign birds. We must fly far away when we see them next time. Got it?" Ruei-Ruei asked "Why are there so many foreign birds?" Mother Sparrow answered, "It seems that 20 years ago, Javan Myna were introduced to Taiwan by some pet keepers. However, the keepers found that those birds were too noisy so the owners set them free. Unexpectedly, these foreign birds turned out to be quite tough and they adapted very well to the surroundings in Taiwan.





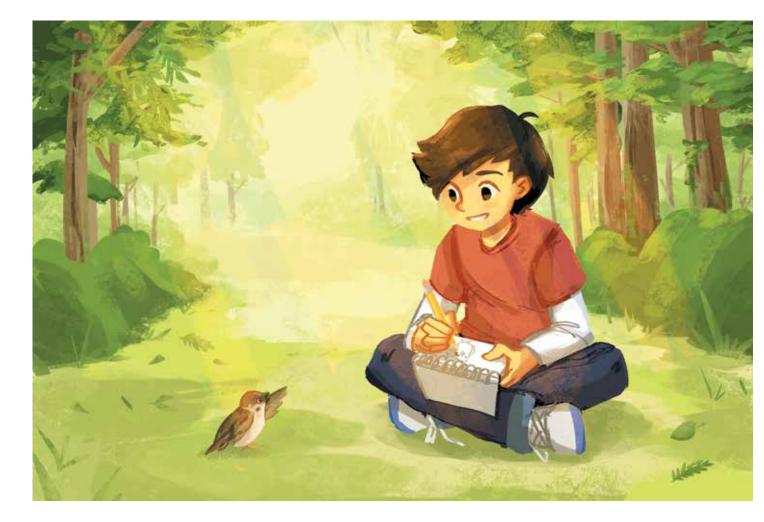
They live in whatever holes they can get into. Their nests can be found on outdoor air-conditioning racks, in the drainage holes in walls and on traffic lights shades. What's worse, I heard their territorial sense is very intense, and they are omnivorous. When they see birds with body sizes smaller than theirs, they will hunt and eat them. Gradually, they have occupied the territory of Taiwanese Starlings, who are now rarely seen!" Ruei-Ruei could hardly believe the terrible conditions that had been created by the Javan Myna. He was so scared that he shivered throughout the night. Mother Sparrow told Father Sparrow that they should move to somewhere more secret and hidden, and after much discussion Father Sparrow finally agreed to move.



Ruei-Ruei and his parents flew for a long time until they finally found a small community on a hill. Their new home was surrounded by mountains, woods and streams. They became acquainted with many good neighbours like Magpies, Oriental Turtle Doves, Black Drongos, Bronzed Drongos, Japanese White-eyes, Muller's Barbets, Chinese Bulbuls, Pigeons, and even Formosan Blue Magpies! Sometimes, Ruei-Ruei came across Gunther's Amoy Frogs, whose croaks sounded like a dog barking. His new habitat was also home to Swinhoe's Tip-Nosed Frogs, warm-hearted Olive Frogs, Snails, Crickets, Butterflies and other insects and animals different from Ruei-Ruei and his family. There were more animals than they had ever seen before in other parts of the mountains. The Sparrow Family thought that since so many animals lived there, the environment must be in a very good condition. They were confident that they had moved to a really good place!



Early one morning, Ruei-Ruei flew to the community to eat little fruit that had fallen off trees. Suddenly, he spotted a boy. The boy's name was Xiao-Yu, and he saw Ruei-Ruei as well but did not disturb him. Xiao-Yu just stood there staring at Ruei-Ruei for a long time. Xiao-Yu loved observing animals. He also loved painting, and he had many creative but impractical ideas in his mind. He sat down and drew a picture of Ruei-Ruei. This was the first time they met.





From that day, Xiao-Yu often hung out with Ruei-Ruei and brought him some toast. Ruei-Ruei was not afraid of Xiao-Yu and always happily enjoyed the food that Xiao-Yu gave him. Without any reason, the boy and the sparrow shared a special chemistry. One day, Ruei-Ruei flew around frantically, shouting, "Xiao-Yu! Xiao-Yu!"

Xiao-Yu looked back and saw nothing: "Oops! No one is there. Who was calling my name?"





Ruei-Ruei shouted "Here! I am Here! Look below you!" Xiao-Yu lowered his head and exclaimed, "Little Sparrow, it's you! And to my surprise, you can speak!" Ruei-Ruei said "Not only am I able to speak, but all the animals, birds, fish, insects, and other living beings can speak too! Oh! I almost forgot to introduce myself. My name is Ruei-Ruei." Xiao-Yu replied "Ahhh! You are called Ruei-Ruei. Is it really true that all animals can talk? I am going to tell everybody!" Ruei-Ruei stopped him:

"Wait! If other people knew this fact, what would they do to us?"



Xiao-Yu asked, "Why did you tell me about this if you wanted me to keep it a secret?" Ruei-Ruei answered, "Because I trust you!" Xiao-Yu looked at Ruei-Ruei and smiled as he nodded his head. The friendship between the boy and the sparrow continued to grow deeper from that day.





Unfortunately, the happiness in the new community did not last long. An unexpected misfortune arrived early in the Sparrow family's stay in the mountain habitat. The community was about to face a major challenge. One day, Magpie hurried into the woods. He was nervous and scared, and let out a loud cry, "Eeeeeek!"

As he was slowly biting seeds in his mouth, the Oriental Turtle Dove said: "Magpie! Haven't you always been reporting good news? Why are you so anxious and unhappy?"



COMING SOON!

The Magpie answered, "I heard some human beings saying that they plan to build something, and they are going to flatten this hill that we call our home!"



The Oriental Turtle Dove was shocked and asked, "Really? What can we do about it?"

"I don't have any idea," replied the Magpie, "I came here to discuss it with everybody!"

"What are we waiting for? Let's go ask the Formosan Blue Magpie!" exclaimed the Oriental Turtle Dove.

The Formosan Blue Magpie was considered the leader of the entire forest family. His cry was loud, his body was quite large, and he had a long tail that dragged behind him. The base colour of the tail was blue, and the rest of the tail was adorned with black and white patterns. He looked like an angel from heaven when he stopped flying to rest on a tree. He was also well respected because he was good at taking care of the forest family. It's no wonder that he was asked for his wisdom whenever there was a problem. After the Formosan Blue Magpie listened to the Magpie, he pondered the situation for a long while. Finally, he said: "This matter is of great importance to the whole community. Let's inform everyone of it quickly and gather good ideas from all."

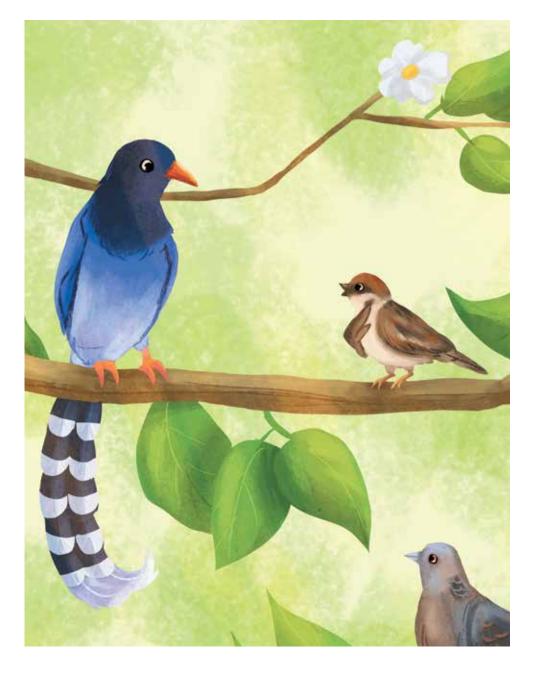




The Black Drongo angrily proposed to have all the birds take a vow to defend their home, and peck at the people who were going to develop the mountain in order to scare them off. The Japanese White-eye timidly said, "I am afraid that our demise will come before theirs."

The Chinese Bulbuls helplessly cried, "Don't tell me that we are waiting to be attacked! Will we end up homeless!?" At that moment, Sparrow Ruei-Ruei opened his mouth and said, "Let me go talk with human beings about it!"





The Formosan Blue Magpie stared at the tiny Sparrow Ruei-Ruei and said, "Are you sure you can carry out the task? Can you persuade the humans not to destroy our home? Aren't you afraid that the people will capture you?" Ruei-Ruei replied, "We sparrows are the least eye-catching bird, but we approach mankind the closest. I believe that I can convince them to give up their idea to develop the mountains. If I fail, at least I can buy some time for us to leave the mountain!"



Ruei-Ruei flew around in circles until he found Xiao-Yu. He told him about the worry of the forest birds. For many hours they discussed how they could prevent the mountain development. Xiao-Yu said the first step would be to find his mother so she could help them execute a plan. Xiao-Yu's mother looked at Xiao-Yu while he was explaining the blueprint in his mind. He looked very serious and determined. She knew Xiao-Yu loved nature and ecology since he was a very small child. She was an elementary school teacher, and she always encouraged and supported children in forming and acting on their own ideas.



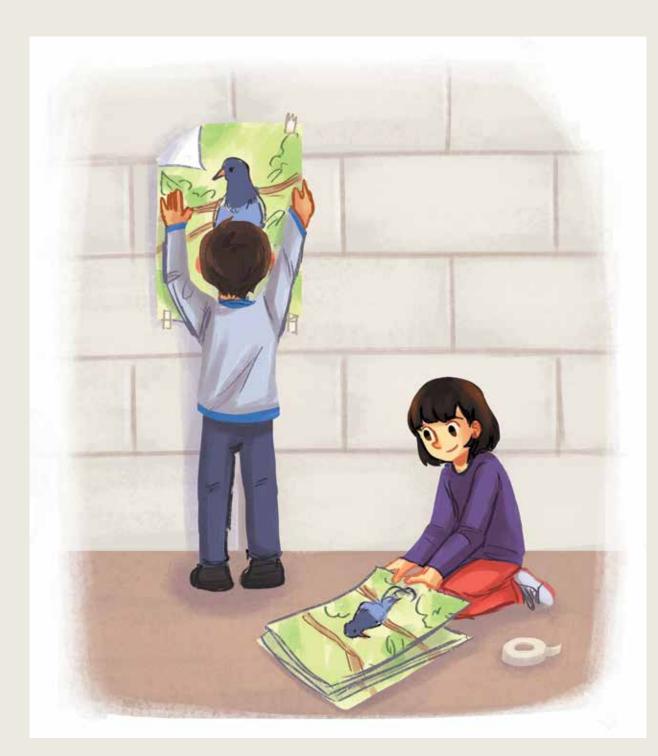


Xiao-Yu's mother helped to make the school a more eco-friendly community by introducing environmental issues into her lessons. She taught her students about the 17 Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations. Following Goal 12: Responsible Consumption and Production, Xiao-Yu's mother led initiatives for the entire school to save energy, reduce the school's carbon footprint and recycle waste.



Together, Xiao-Yu and his mother made a plan to apply the UN Sustainable Development Goals to problem of the development of the mountains and the destruction of the birds' forest habitat. Inspired by Goal 15: Life on Land, they decided to lead students on trips to the mountains for research and observation on-site, instead of just reading about nature in books. Xiao-Yu and his mother led workshops on the eco-system and focused especially on the roles that birds and other animals played to ensure the forest remained a thriving habitat for all species.





The school students became inspired by Xiao-Yu's workshops, and began to come up with their own ideas to protect wildlife. First, a group of students gathered together after school to build and erect signs to inform human visitors about the different species that lived on the ground and in the trees. Next, an even larger group of students organised nature walks that were offered to the public. On the weekend, student volunteers would take groups of townspeople out to the forest to encourage them to form a closer bond with nature and familiarise themselves with the multitude of species that lived in the mountains in harmony.





The student leaders were eager to inform their audiences of the dire consequences of human development on the delicate balance of the ecosystem. The new visitors to the forest absorbed this important information like sponges and spread the news throughout the whole town.

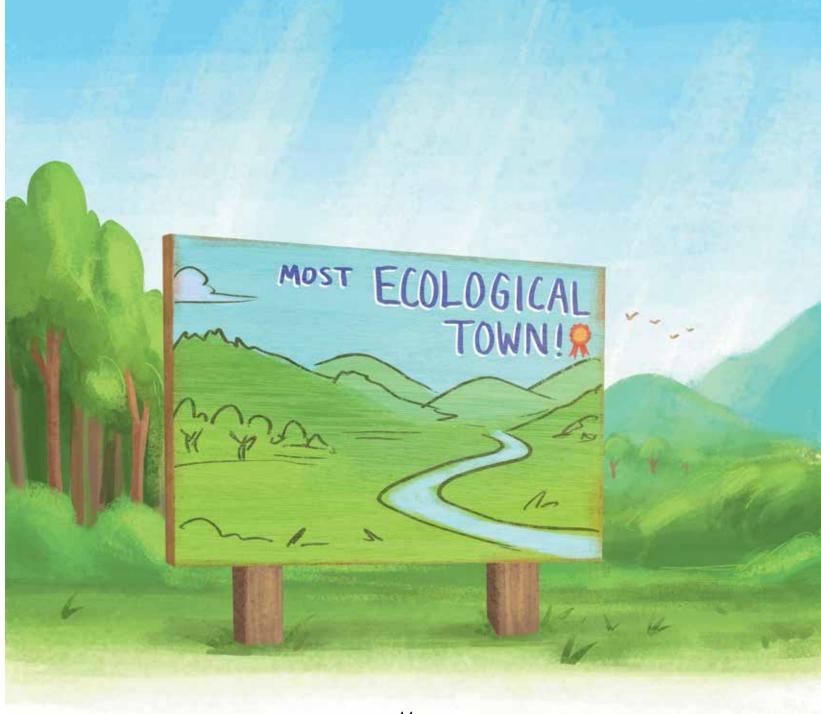


Finally, all the students in Xiao-Yu's school helped to raise awareness about the endangered bird and animal species through an online social media campaign. Students took photos and videos of bird sightings and the beautiful views of the mountain and shared these online with their friends and family. They wrote passionate words of optimism and determination about preserving the forests and published their thoughts throughout their social network. The campaign to save the birds' habitat from destruction went absolutely viral! These activities taught students to learn the purpose of protecting the habitats of different creatures, rather than focusing only on the desires of humans.





Xiao-Yu's father actively contacted journalists and newspapers to come and report on the beautiful scenery in the mountains and how the school students were contributing to the protection of the land. Xiao-Yu spoke on behalf of Ruei-Ruei and told everyone that not only did rare species need care, but even the commonly-seen sparrows had reached a state of crisis. Xiao-Yu told his community about the importance of protecting life on the land, and he warned them against getting used to the idea of species becoming endangered and disappearing, as this was seriously disrupting the balance of the forest ecosystem. Through a series of community events and reports, the crisis of the forest development was finally eliminated. The area gradually became famous nation-wide for being the most ecological town in the country. All the students in Xiao-Yu's school became competent Eco-tour guides!





All of these incredible changes came from a small, humble sparrow and a little boy who were able to achieve their goal together!





about the author



Yun-Hung's favourite hobby is reading, especially the books about nature. He lives in a remote mountain area. The unique location of his home has allowed him to get to know many wild animals.

Yun-Hung often comes into contact with Taiwanese blue dragonflies, golden-back turtle doves, spotted frogs...and many other animals. It makes him very happy to see animals in real life, not just on the television or in books. Through activities organized by his school, he has learned that the

Earth's biological chain is indispensable, and if it were to fail, the entire ecosystem would lose balance. As a result, all forms of life would suffer, including humans. Therefore, Yun-Hung hopes that by creating the story, *Small Sparrow, Great Hero*, he can awaken everyone's attention to ecology. Each individual person is small and can only do so much by themselves, but Mother Teresa said, "We can't do great things, but we can do a lot of little things full of big love." We must educate outselves about the small tasks that we can do to protect the Earth.

Yun-Hung says, "If we fill ourselves with knowledge of nature, and everyone works hard together, I believe the we can make the world a better place."

about the illustrator



Celia Tian is an illustrator and comic artist based in Ontario, Canada. She has graduated from OCAD University with a BDes in illustration. Her work consists of a variety of styles, focusing on colour and lighting as well as the dynamic movement of lines. These elements are combined to express ideas and tell compelling stories.

Celia has collaborated with authors to create illustrations for children's books and comics. She actively values good communication and the creation of content geared towards

an audience, and always keep them in mind while thinking of and creating concepts.



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The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

All children are holders of important human rights. Twenty-five years ago in 1989, over a hundred countries agreed on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. In the most important human rights treaty in history, they promised to protect and promote all children's equal rights, which are connected and equally important.

In the 54 Articles of the Convention, countries make solemn promises to defend children's needs and dreams. They recognize the role of children in realizing their rights, which requires that children be heard and involved in decision-making. In particular, Article 24 and Article 27 defend children's rights to safe drinking water, good food, a clean and safe environment, health, and quality of life. Article 29 recognizes children's rights to education that develops personality, talents and potential, respecting human rights and the natural environment.

— Dr. Alexandra Wandel World Future Council





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Sustainable Development Goals Statement

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals are a bridge from the previous Millennium Development Goals adopted by the international community in 2000 to the future. Construction of this bridge began in 2012 at the United Nations Rio+ 20 Conference on Sustainable Development. At this Conference, countries agreed that it was time to take concrete action for the present and the future by acting on issues such as climate change, poverty, inequality and biodiversity. This resulted in The Future We Want, a global statement of priorities and responsibilities for countries toward the people, environment, biodiversity and future.

In 2015, the bridge took shape in the form of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, which countries agreed to implement between 2015 and 2030. The SDGs, as they are commonly called, comprise a set of 17 specific goals, over 160 targets within these goals, and hundreds of indicators to measure if the goals and targets are being met. The SDGs address the key issues that face our world community now and that will define this community in the future, such as poverty, climate change, education rights, gender equality, discrimination, health, food and water access and safety, and the promotion of justice for all members of society. Since 2015, children around the world have joined in efforts to incorporate the SDGs in their countries and communities, adding their voices and perspectives as future leaders. The SDGs show the power of all people, including children, to create positive and lasting change that addresses the needs of local and global society.

— Dr. Alexandra R. Harrington Centre for International Sustainable Development Law



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Thanks and Inspiring Resources

'Voices of Future Generations' International Commission

Warmest thanks to the International Commission, launched in 2014 by His Excellency Judge CG Weeramantry, UNESCO Peace Education Research Award Laureate, which supports, guides and profiles this new series of Children's Books Series, including: Ms Alexandra Wandel (WFC), Professor Marie-Claire Cordonier Segger (CISDL), Dr Kristiann Allen (New Zealand), Ms Irina Bokova (UNESCO), Ms Emma Hopkin / Ms Hannah Rolls (UK), Dr Ying-Shih Hsieh (EQPF), Ms Melinda Manuel (PNG), Ms Julia Marton-Lefevre (IUCN), Dr James Moody (Australia), Professor Kirsten Sandberg (UN CRC Chair), Ms Patricia Chaves (UN DSD), Judge Marcel Szabo (Hungary), Dr Christina Voigt (Norway), Ms Gabrielle Sacconaghi-Bacon (Moore Foundation), Dr Alexandra Harrington (CISDL), Professor Carey Newman (First Nations of Canada), Ms Monique Gray Smith (First Nations of Canada), Sheikha Hissa Hamdan bin Rashid Al Maktoum (ELF).

The World Future Council consists of 50 eminent global changemakers from across the globe. Together, they work to pass on a healthy planet and just societies to our children and grandchildren. (www.worldfuturecouncil.org)

United Nations Education, Science and Culture Organization (UNESCO) which celebrates its 70th Anniversary throughout 2015, strives to build networks among nations that enable humanity's moral and intellectual solidarity by mobilizing for education, building intercultural understanding, pursuing scientific cooperation, and protecting freedom of expression. (https://en.unesco.org/)

The **United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC)** is the body of 18 independent experts that monitors implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and its three Optional Protocols, by its State parties. (www.ohchr.org)

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) provides leadership and encourages partnership in caring for the environment by inspiring, informing, and enabling nations and peoples to improve their quality of life without compromising that of future generations. (www.unep.org)

International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) envisions a just world that values and conserves nature, working to conserve the integrity and diversity of nature and to ensure that any use of natural resources is equitable and ecologically sustainable. (www.iucn.org)

Centre for International Sustainable Development Law (CISDL) supports understanding, development and implementation of law for sustainable development by leading legal research through scholarship and dialogue, and facilitating legal education through teaching and capacity-building. (www.cisdl.org)

Environmental Quality Protection Foundation (EQPF) established in 1984 is the premier ENGO in Taiwan. Implementing environmental education, tree plantation, and international participation through coordinating transdisciplinarity resources to push forward environmental and sustainable development in our time.

World's Largest Lesson (WLL) World's Largest Lesson brings the Global Goals to children all over the world and unites them in taking action. Since it was launched in September 2015, the World's Largest Lesson has reached over 130 countries and impacted over 8 million children each year. (https://worldslargestlesson.globalgoals.org/)

Emirates Literature Foundation The Emirates Literature Foundation, home of the Emirates Airline Festival of Literature, is a not-for-profit non-governmental organisation that supports and nurtures a love of literature in the UAE and across the region through a programme of varied cultural initiatives. Recognising the distinctive contribution that literature makes to children's lives, the Foundation focuses on introducing and cultivating a spirit of reading while acting as a catalyst for writing and cultural exchange. (https://www.elfdubai.org/en/home)



About the 'Voices of Future Generations' Series

To celebrate the 25th Anniversary of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Voices of Future Generations Children's Book Series, led by the United Nations and a consortium of educational charities including the World Future Council (WFC), the Centre for International Sustainable Development Law (CISDL), the Environmental Quality Protection Foundation (EQPF), the Fundacion Ecos and the Trust for Sustainable Living (TSL) among others, also the Future Generations Commissioners of several countries, and international leaders from the UN Division for Sustainable Development, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, the UN Education, Science and Culture Organisation (UNESCO), the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), and other international organizations, has launched the new Voices of Future Generations Series of Children's Books.

Every year we feature stories from our selected group of child authors, inspired by the outcomes of the Earth Summit, the Rio+20 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD) and the world's Sustainable Development Goals, and by the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) itself. Our junior authors, ages 8-12, are concerned about future justice, poverty, the global environment, education and children's rights. Accompanied by illustrations, each book profiles creative, interesting and adventurous ideas for creating a just and greener future, in the context of children's interests and lives.

We aim to publish the books internationally in ten languages, raising the voices of future generations and spread their messages for a fair and sustainable tomorrow among their peers and adults, worldwide. We welcome you to join us in support of this inspiring partnership, at www.vofg.org.

I wouldn't be surprised if Yun-Hung told me that he had a ring of King Solomon and could talk to animals, because in this book's lifelike and vivid depiction of all native Taiwanese species, Yun-Hung has revealed his secret.

Dr. Ying-Shih Hsieh

Chairman, Environmental Quality Protection Foundation, Taiwan

The pages of *The Small Sparrow Hero* are filled with beautiful illustrations of magical Asian birds living in their habitat, and yet struggling to stay there. Yun-Hung has created a magical and educational story where a determined boy raised awareness about endangered birds and the future of wildlife animals, educating a whole community. *The Small Sparrow Hero* is another must-read story of the UNESCO Voices of Future Generations Children's Book Series.

Dr. Ode<mark>eth</mark> Lara

Global Senior Programme Officer, UNESCO Voices of Future Generations

In *The Small Sparrow Hero*, Yun-Hung poignantly highlights the potential for humanity to coexist with or cause catastrophe to ecosystems and species. This story is one of education for all involved. The Small Sparrow Hero, Ruei-Ruei, learns about the damage caused by unchecked development and the power of even the smallest voice. His human friend, Xiao-Yu, learns how to advocate for those without a public voice and the importance of putting the Sustainable Development Goals into practice. And both the bird and human communities learn the importance of working together for the common good. This is truly an inspiration for readers of all ages.

Dr. Alexandra Harrington, Professor, University of Albany School of Law, and affiliated faculty at the Global Institute for Health and Human Rights

UNESCO Voices of Future Generations | Children's Book Series The Small Sparrow Hero | 15





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