

The Visible Girls

by
Tyronah Sioni

Illustrated by Kasia Nieżywińska



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The
Visible Girls



by
Tyronah Sioni



prefaces



This book is a wonderful example of a child's brilliantly insightful and creative comment on gender equality issues in her home region. Tyronah's story of Sine and the work she does to create and mobilise support for a gender equality programme is an important comment about the pledge in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child to eliminate violence and discrimination against women and girls.

The Voices of Future Generations Children's Book Series offers a perfect platform for children's views to be heard. It is inspiring to see how issues of children's human rights are important to this generation and it's exciting to hear how they envisage positive futures. Tyronah's vision should be an inspiration to us all.

Melinda Beier Manuel
Goodwill Ambassador for the Small Island States, Voices of Future Generations





What an honour and joy it is to introduce this lyrical, imaginative and courageous book by Tyronah Sioni. Tyronah is an unusually bright, sensitive and gifted young author, whose ideas and commitment will surely shape the future of her country of origin, Papua New Guinea, her region, and our shared Earth. At the tender age of 9, Tyronah is already deeply concerned about a range of global crises like environmental degradation, pollution, corruption and discrimination, and she is personally engaged in addressing them.

Tyronah's powerful story voices her concern about the condition of girls and women, in her country, and in the world at large. Through her eloquently crafted narrative, Tyra, as she is known to her friends, makes accessible to readers, young and old, UN conventions and goals on gender equality that may otherwise seem remote. She brings to life in a heartwarmingly direct way the collaboration between governments and civil society, and the active participation of young people, that is essential for realising the promises inherent in these Conventions, and securing human and planetary rights for current and future generations.

Storytelling is among the most ancient of human arts and remains to this day one of the most effective ways to bring about change. Tyra already masters this art with grace and ease, not just captivating but also activating her readers. She shows that it is possible for even a powerless bystander to take a stand against injustice and discrimination. More importantly, she shows that when our conscience is awakened to injustice, it is not enough to simply protest; she suggests that we can and must find creative and innovative ways to transform the injustice. She illustrates that while there will always be challenges and obstacles faced when one pioneers change in new ways, there will also be allies along the way to support and champion changemakers, and to make the seemingly impossible possible - and in this case, the invisible visible!

What moved me so deeply in Tyra's book is the depth of her wisdom and foresight in taking her readers on a threefold journey through this short story. She enables readers to witness the reality of the mistreatment of women and girls in all our societies. She then awakens readers to the possibility of effecting change in society by starting with themselves. She finally activates their creative capacity to find new solutions and become engaged actors of change. With her mere 9 years of experience on Earth, Tyra has uncovered the secrets of societal transformation that have taken me 27 years of experience working in global governance, justice, peace and security to uncover! 'Theatre of Transformation', which emerged from my profound human encounters in countries in conflict around the world, as a vehicle to transform today's multiple global crises into positive opportunities, also uses the medium of storytelling, and takes participants on a similar threefold journey of transformation to Tyra's: to witness what is; to awaken what can be; and enact the change that is needed in ourselves and in our world.

Bravo Tyra! And thank you for this compelling invitation to us all to transform the world with our imagination and conviction!

*Rama Mani
Councillor, World Future Council*



chapter 1

There was once a girl named Sine. Sine loved to draw and loved swimming. Sine was a fierce and independent yet friendly girl who was always ready to help anything or anyone in danger. She loved her island. She lived on a small island a bit far from Port Moresby with her mother, in a small village. It was all they could afford after her father died. She had a best friend named Kaimon, who was the truest, kindest and bravest person she knew. The only trouble with Kaimon was that other people, for some reason, could not see or hear her.





One day as Sine and Kaimon were getting off the boat, which took them to their school in a neighbouring island, they saw something a bit strange. They were passing a shop on the docks. They saw a man shouting at a woman, forcing her out of the shop, until the woman was lying helplessly on the ground. The man looked very selfish and arrogant.

Kaimon nudged Sine, telling her that they simply must do something. Sine trembled a bit but then regained her confidence. She raced over and told the loud man to stop. The man stopped, rolled his eyes, and returned to the shop. The woman got up slowly and limped away. Nobody said anything.

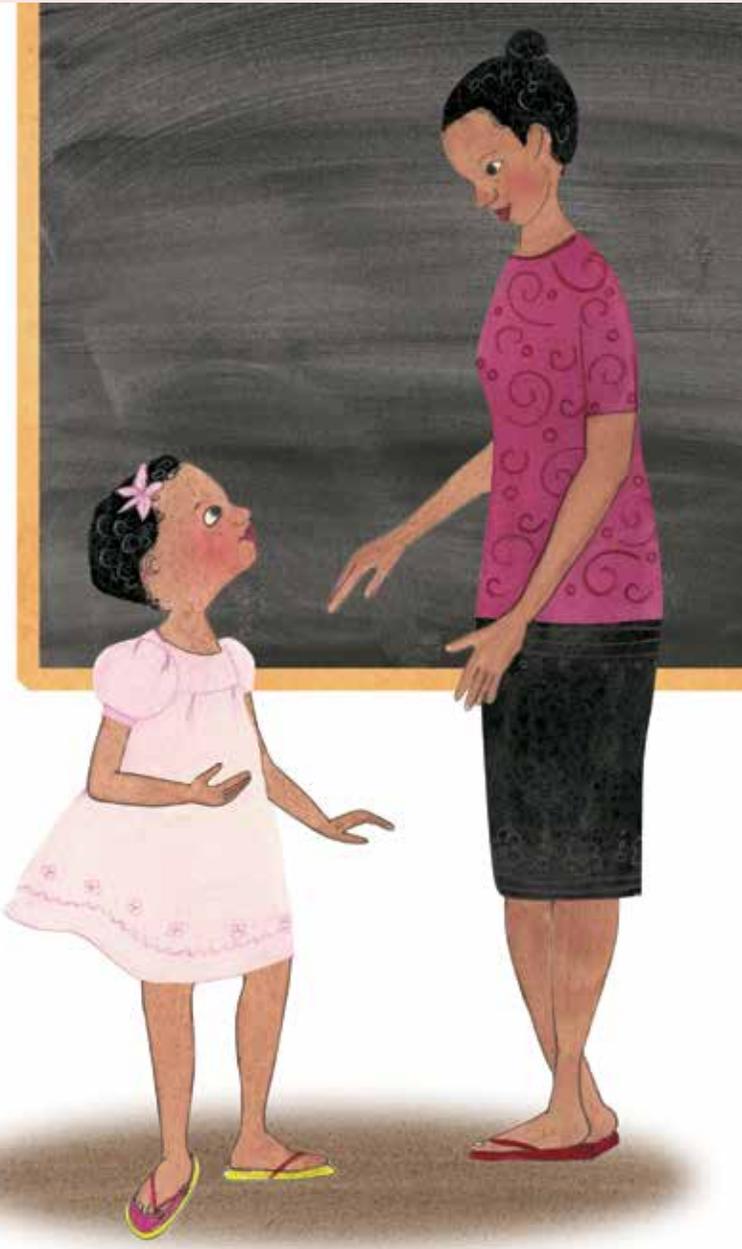
Sine walked the rest of the way to school. She kept thinking about what they had witnessed and how wrong it was. Her mother always told her that respecting other people is very important. How was it possible that a lady was treated so and that no one could stand up for her but two small girls, one of whom no one could even see?





chapter 2

After many lessons and much worry, Sine decided to tell her school Principal what had happened. The Principal was kind and thanked her for talking about it. She explained that violence and discrimination against women and girls is forbidden in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.



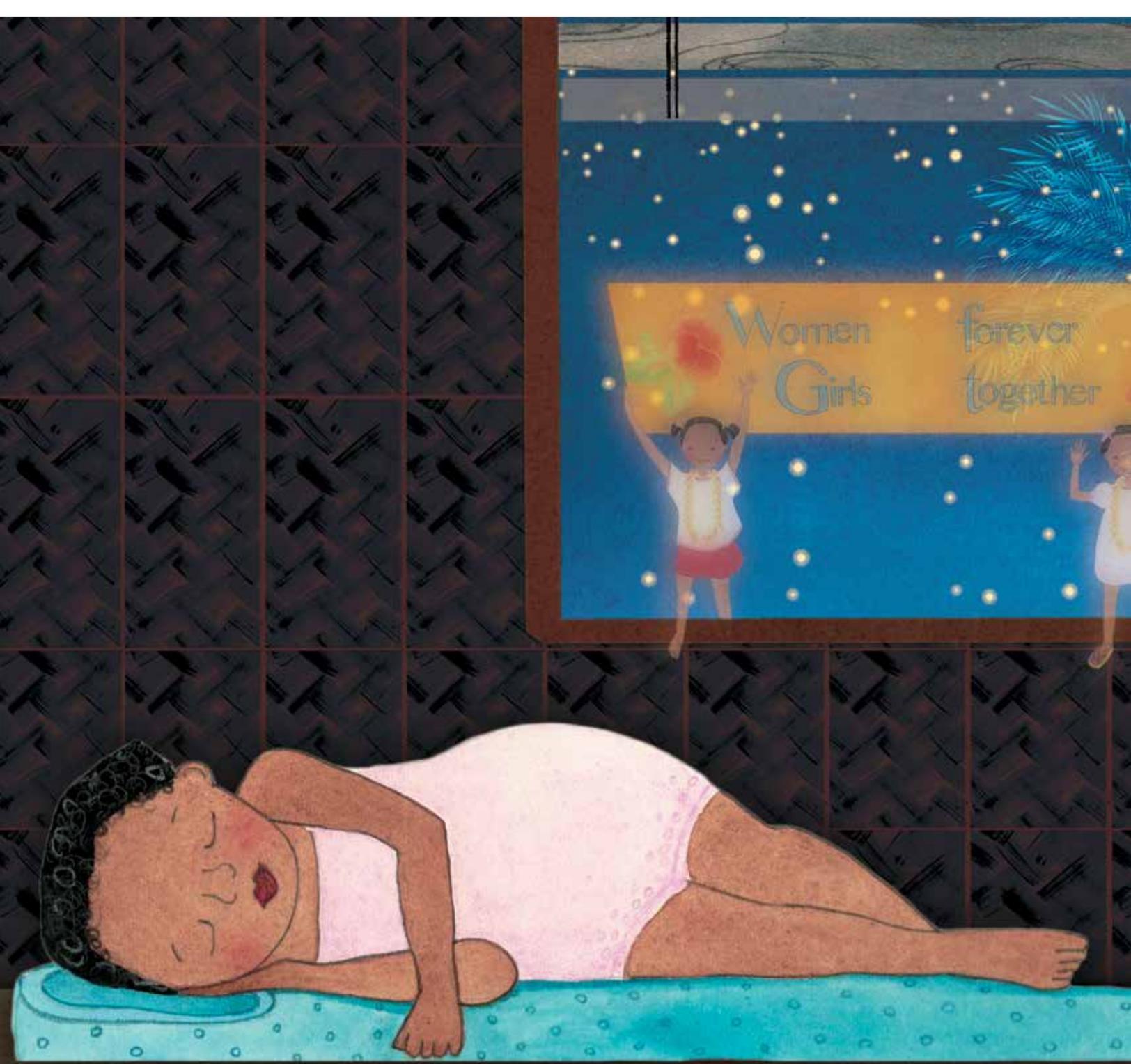
It remained, however, a major problem in many island communities and countries. Sine remembered seeing something on the news about groups who worked to educate people about this problem and helped to find solutions.



That afternoon, Sine threw her schoolbag over her shoulder and left the tall front doors of her school with Kaimon. They went straight to the island library to do some further research on the problem. They learned many things about how women and girls can be mistreated. They began to understand that turning their backs, and pretending to be invisible, was exactly the wrong way to change things.

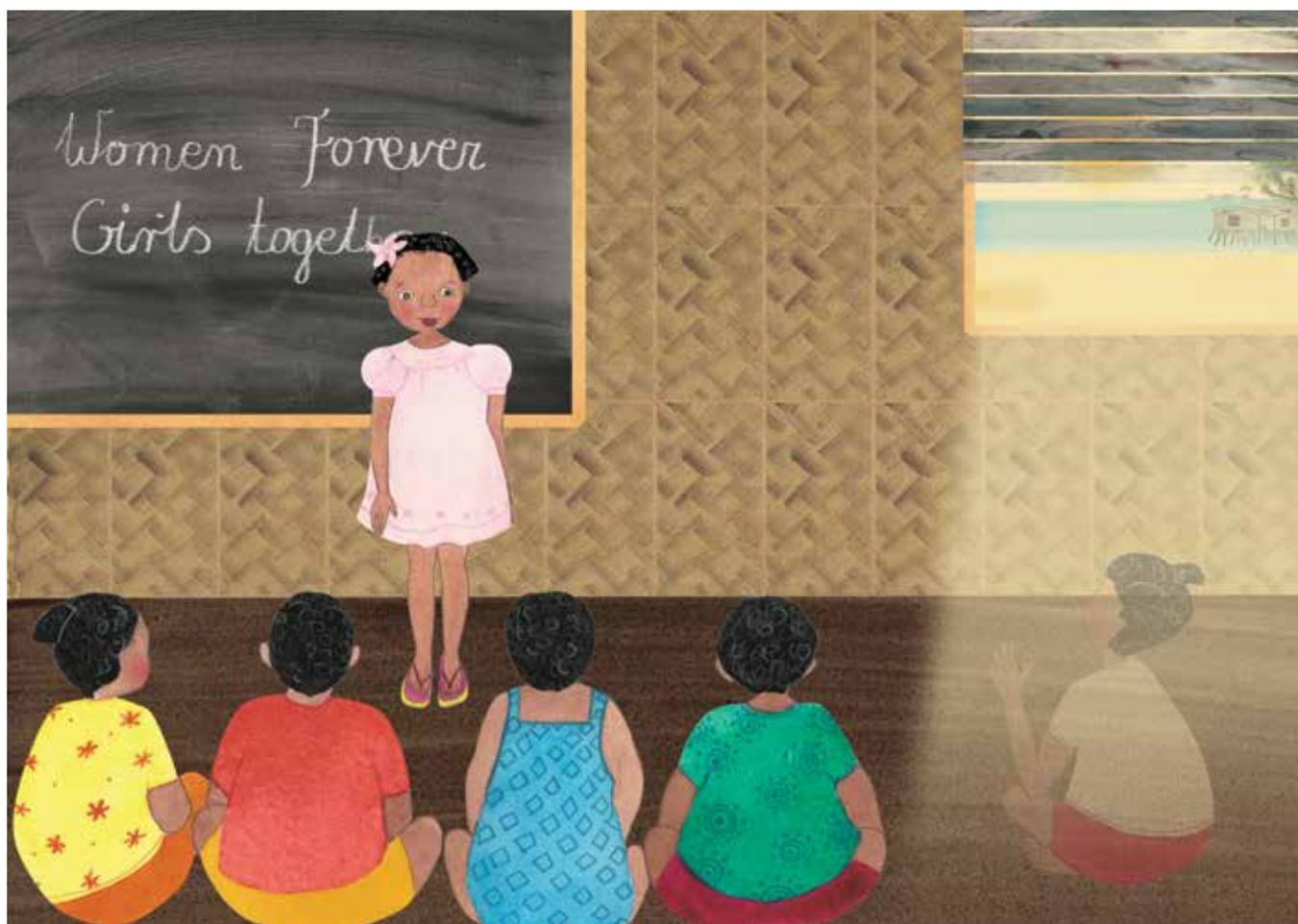
As Sine went to bed that night, she thought about what the two girls might do. She dreamed that Kaimon and Sine worked together to create an education programme about Women's Rights. She even saw their motto "Women Forever, Girls Together (WFGT)" painted in bright colour on a big banner.





The next day, Sine and Kaimon went straight to their Principal's office. Sine asked permission to speak on women's rights and gender equality in their School Assembly, as a first step in starting a new children's education radio programme for girls and women. The Principal agreed. Sine worked hard to prepare her presentation, taking on more research, and practising with Kaimon who gave her lots of advice. On the day of her speech, she was very nervous. Kaimon encouraged her, telling her to be brave. They had to do something, after all. And since Sine was visible, the task of speaking out was hers! Sine wished that Kaimon could also have a voice, and be seen, so that she could help. But she knew it was impossible.

During assembly, Sine felt alone at first, but she spoke in a clear voice. She explained that women do have rights and should be able to live without fear or violence, and to participate without discrimination. She told a story that everyone could understand.



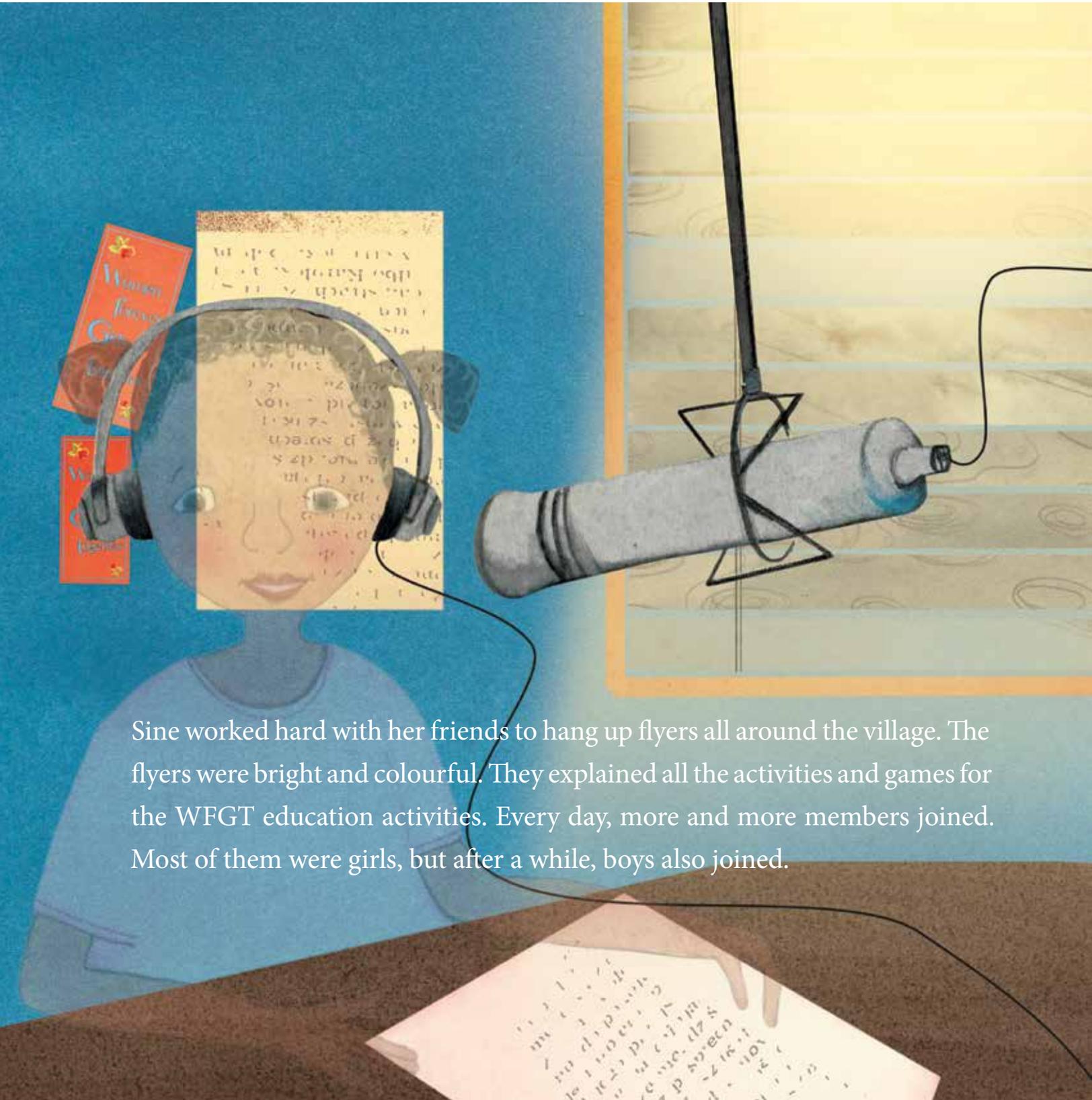
At the end, she encouraged everyone to stand up for their rights. She challenged everyone to help create a new educational programme with her. There were many smiles, and nods as she finished. Kaimon cheered the loudest, even though Sine was the only one who could hear her.



The Principal, teachers, and students agreed to support the new programme. The Principal thought it would be a great opportunity for the school, students, and for the country's development.



chapter 3



Sine worked hard with her friends to hang up flyers all around the village. The flyers were bright and colourful. They explained all the activities and games for the WFGT education activities. Every day, more and more members joined. Most of them were girls, but after a while, boys also joined.

They started the children's radio programme and held interviews with all the women leaders in their community, asking them questions and seeking ideas for things that girls could do to help improve their village. Kaimon could participate more that way because, even though she was still invisible, her voice was getting stronger. Sometimes when it was only Sine and Kaimon in the studio, she would speak out about the things she cared about, and people started to hear her.



Before long, even adult women and men were asking if they could join. Sine always said “The more, the merrier!” And Kaimon would dance in excitement.

Soon, all the women and most of the men in the village had signed up. They were becoming very active, even starting their own little projects. Many of the girls and women started their own small businesses, growing flowers or vegetables to sell, raising chickens and delivering eggs to families for breakfast, painting pictures and carving sculptures, even making necklaces out of shells. One woman had the idea to begin a tiny new savings bank, so that all the women could borrow money to start gardens or crafts, then pay it back to be lent out to help others.

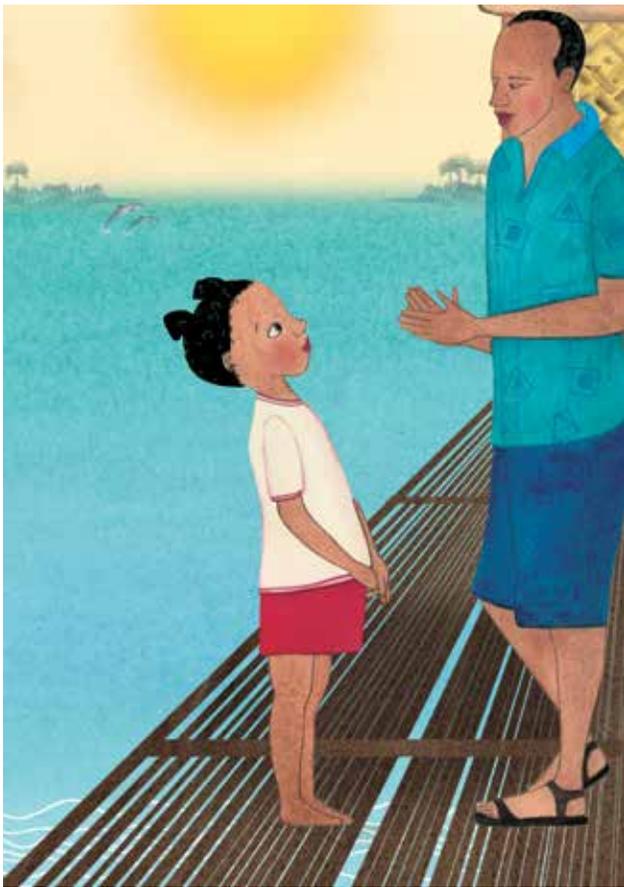
One afternoon, Kaimon and Sine were leading their radio programme and taking calls from girls all over the island who wanted to share stories of their activities. They were playing a song while they rested their voices, when the telephone rang.



It was a friend called Tau and he wanted to arrange a meeting with the Prime Minister so that Sine could tell him what the group was doing. Sine felt all nervous again, but Kaimon didn't hesitate. She answered right away "That would be awesome!" And then the music ended, so straight away, Sine announced over the radio that the Women's Rights group would be meeting the Prime Minister. Everyone was surprised, but also very proud. And they knew they couldn't back down now.



chapter 4



The next morning, Sine and Kaimon woke up early. Sine's mother had made her favourite: bananas and fish! After breakfast, she went down to the beach for a bath.

She saw her friends in the waters near her but did not stop to say hello, as her mind was too busy. Sine and Kaimon played in the warm waves together to help each other calm down.

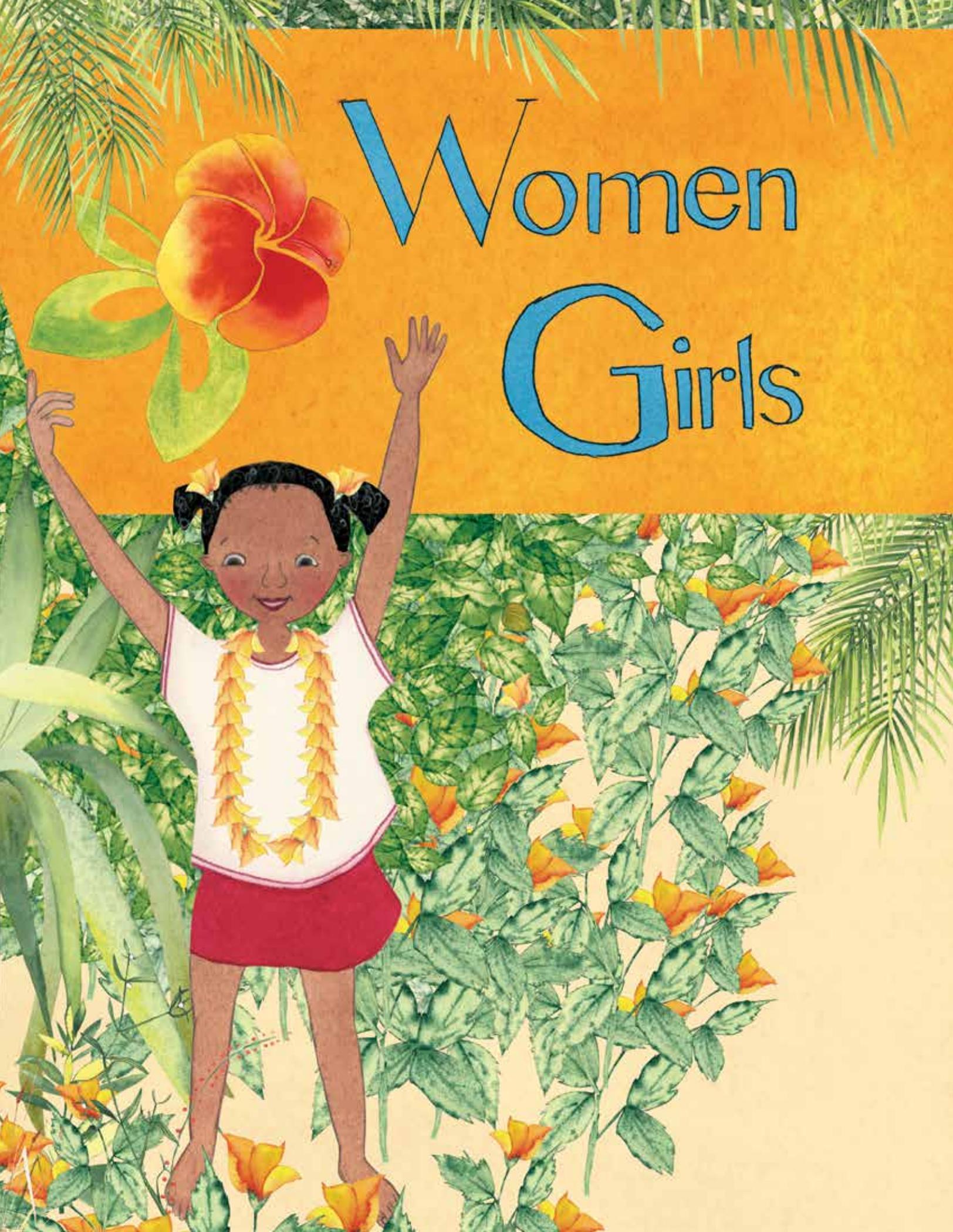




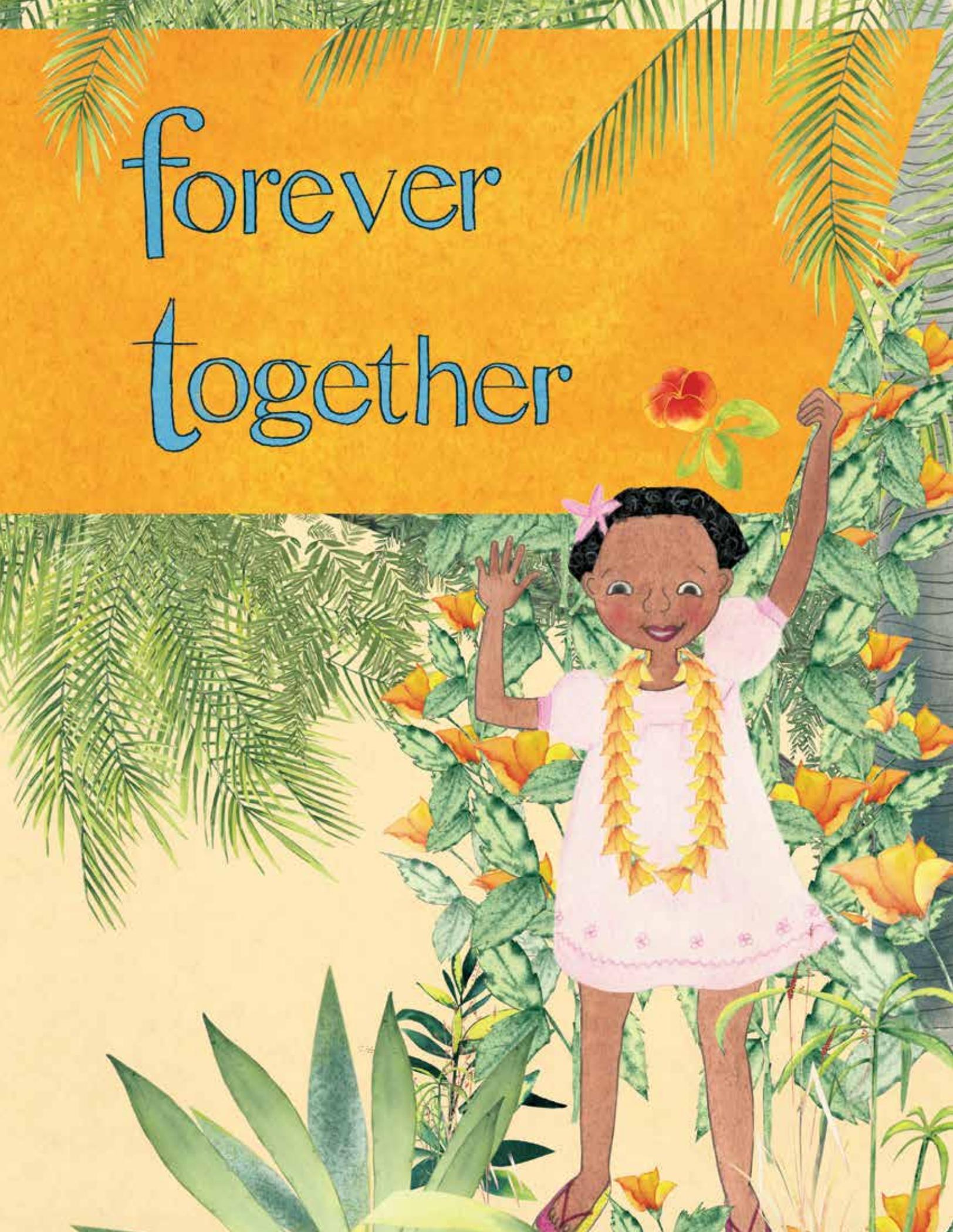
They could see leaping silver dolphins just beyond the breakwater, and this filled them with happiness.

When they arrived back at the house, a visitor was waiting. Sine's mother was sitting on the mat in front of him. It was Tau, the friend who had called them on the radio. Tau had very exciting news for Sine and Kaimon – the meeting was arranged and the girls would travel all the way to Port Moresby to meet the Prime Minister of their country.

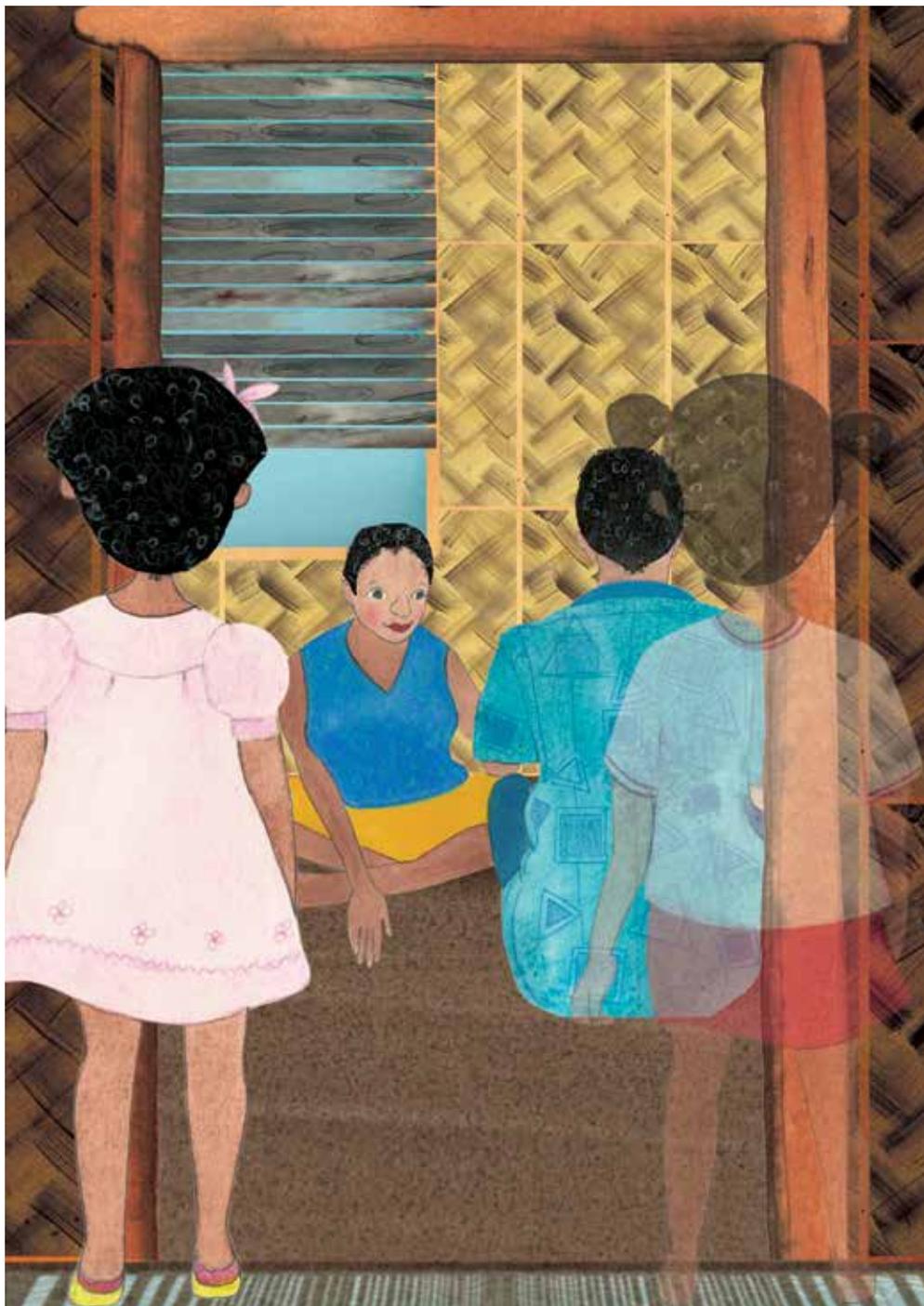
Women Girls



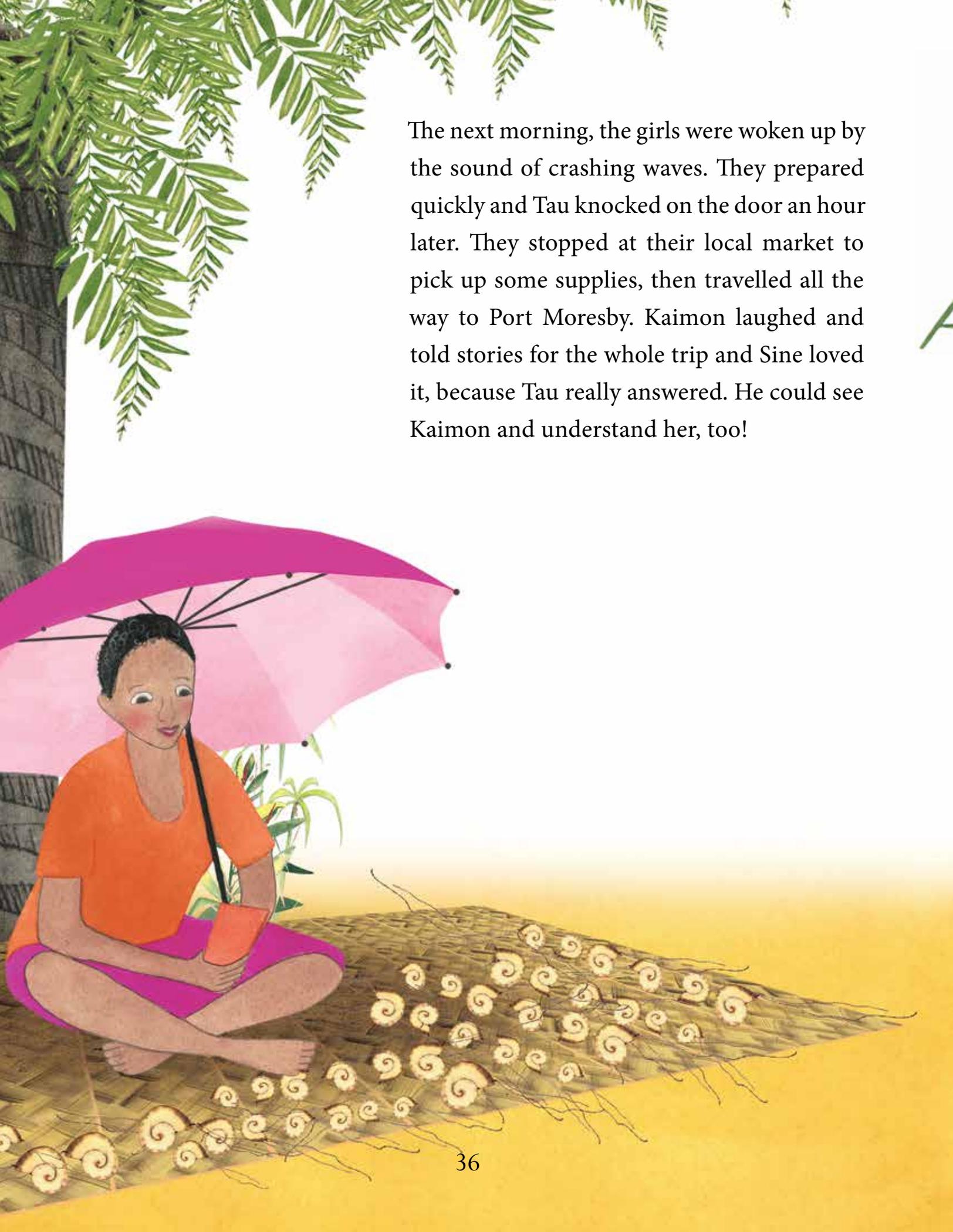
forever
together



Sine was terribly excited and nervous all over again. She glanced at Kaimon, asking silently for reassurance. Tau looked too, and then asked Kaimon directly, “And what would you like to say to the leader of your country, little brave one?” Kaimon smiled and answered gaily: “I’ll just explain that there is strength in all of us. When the girls of Papua New Guinea come together and stand up for each other, we can change the world.” Sine nearly jumped two miles in the air. She was amazed! It was the first time that anyone - except her - had really been able to see Kaimon.



Sine felt her heart fill with joy. She was happy that people were finally recognising their girls' education programme and all the efforts of the group to bring boys and girls together for a better village. And she was surprised but overjoyed that her best friend, who had always been quietly beside her and supporting her, was finally becoming... visible!

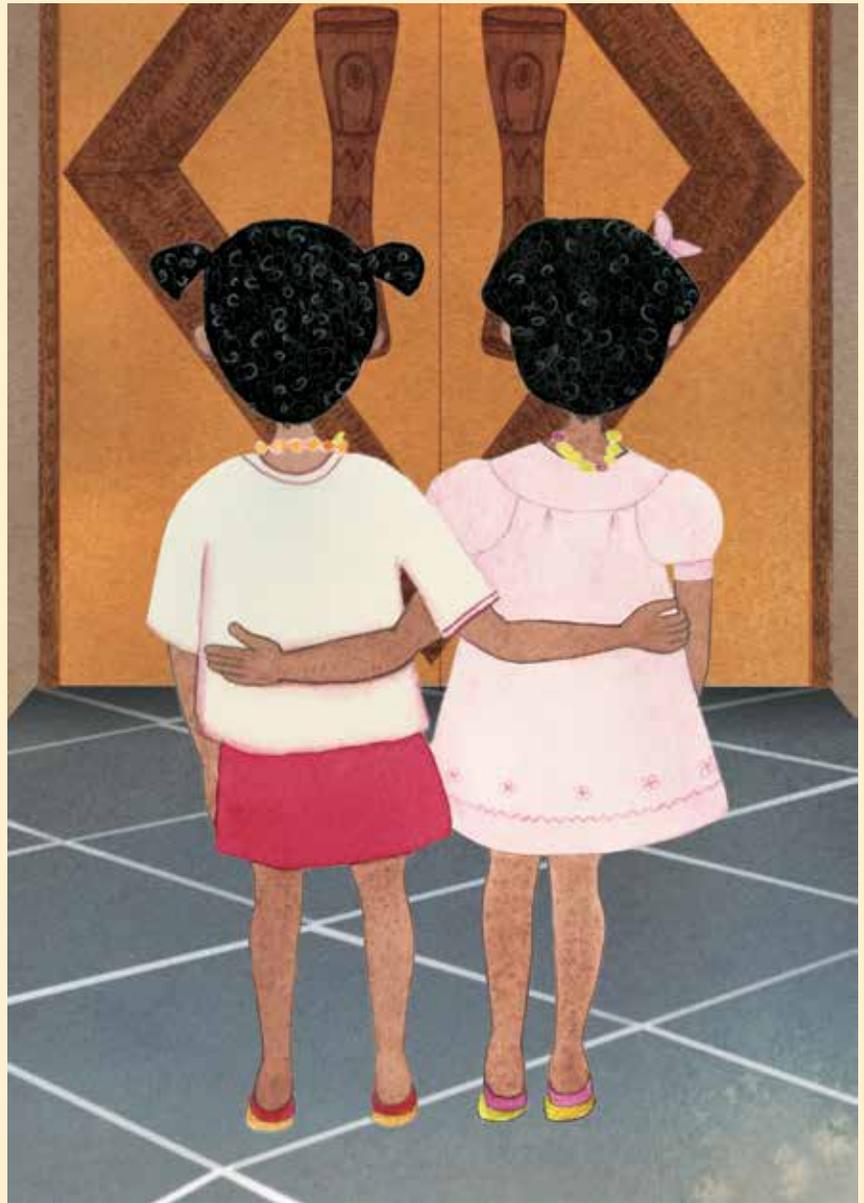
An illustration of a woman with dark hair, wearing an orange short-sleeved shirt and a purple skirt, sitting cross-legged on a woven mat. She is holding a large, open pink umbrella. The mat is covered with many small, spiral seashells. To her left is the trunk of a tree with green, feathery leaves hanging down. The background is a bright, yellowish-white sky. The overall style is simple and colorful.

The next morning, the girls were woken up by the sound of crashing waves. They prepared quickly and Tau knocked on the door an hour later. They stopped at their local market to pick up some supplies, then travelled all the way to Port Moresby. Kaimon laughed and told stories for the whole trip and Sine loved it, because Tau really answered. He could see Kaimon and understand her, too!



chapter 5

Before they knew it, they had arrived at the Prime Minister's office. Tau pressed the doorbell and stood there with a large grin on his face, while Sine became very nervous again. Kaimon gave her a quick hug in reassurance and then straightened up politely.



The large wooden door opened and a tall thin man with his nose high up in the air led them to an elegant office. They quietly entered through the door and approached the Prime Minister. He was sitting comfortably in a large cushiony chair at the end of a bulky, wooden, oval shaped table in a bright room with lots of certificates and carvings on the wall.

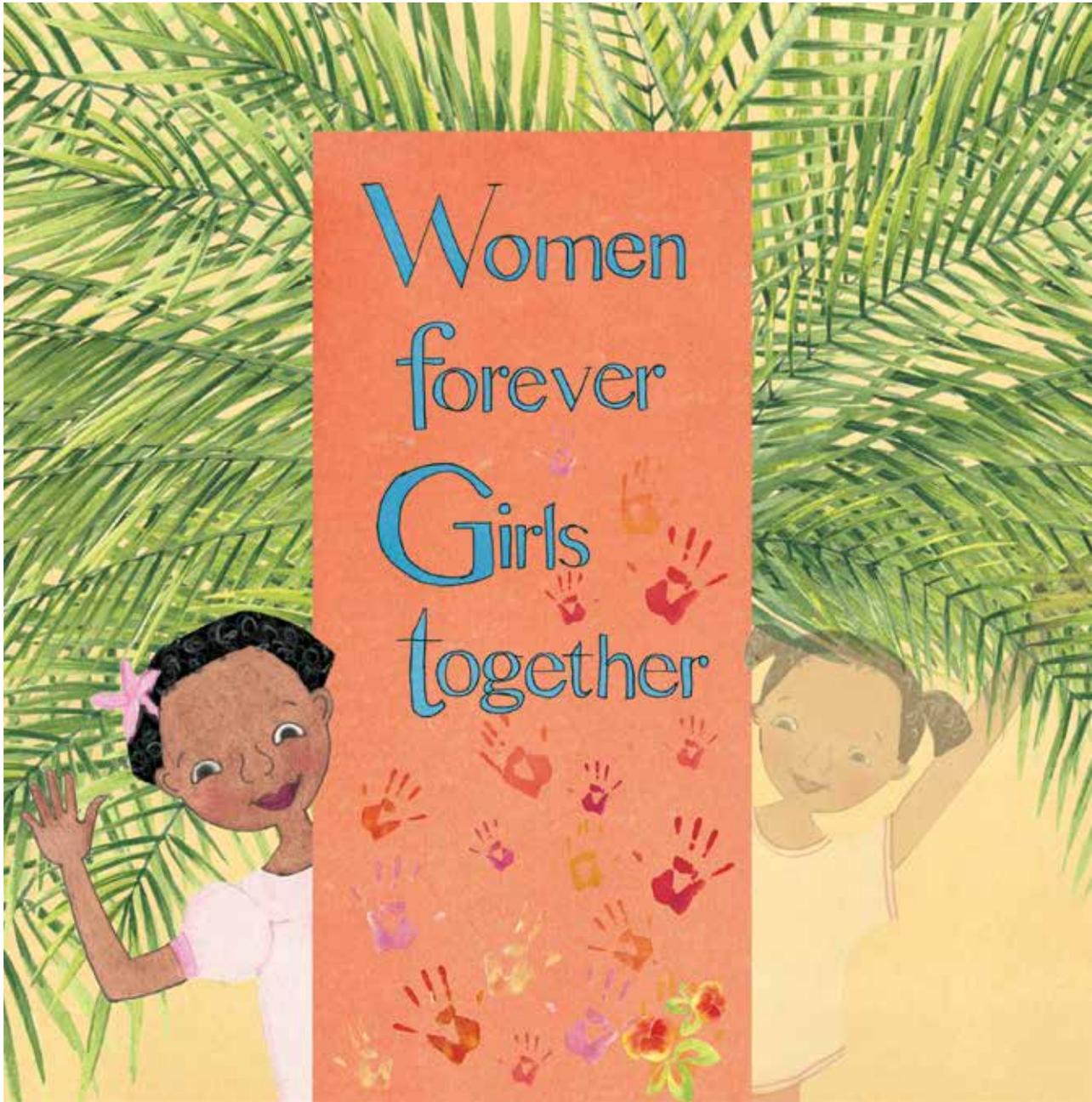




Tau was the first to say hello. Then the Prime Minister turned to Sine and Kaimon, saying welcome. Sine answered with a trembling voice and Kaimon smiled brightly, but said nothing. Sine was terrified that her friend had disappeared again. But the Prime Minister asked both girls to sit down in the chairs diagonally next to him.

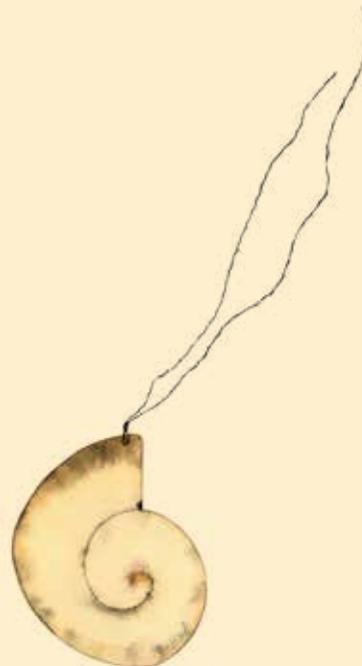
He had heard about the WFGT programmes on the radio show and he was interested in what they were doing. Sine told him about their mission to improve awareness of women's rights in the community and eventually the whole country. Kaimon added that women are citizens of this planet, too.





The Prime Minister was delighted. He was proud of the girls and everything that they had done. He was also happy because, as he explained, it was his mission to make sure that girls and women never felt frightened or silenced again. He had just been to New York, he explained, to the United Nations, and world leaders had agreed on Sustainable Development Goals for the whole planet.





Gender equality, and participation of girls and women in the community, were two of the most important goals that the world leaders had committed to achieve. As soon as I heard your radio programme, I realised that it won't be as hard as I thought for my country, he admitted. "With Visible Girls like you on our side, we'll meet our goals, and I believe that we'll even have fun doing it!" Kaimon's smile was brilliant and Sine nearly cried for joy. By standing up for themselves and for each other, they could help make the world better for everyone.

The End

about the author



Tyronah Sioni (9) is originally from Papua New Guinea. She lives in Singapore with her father and her three brothers. She is a pupil of the Australian International School. Everyone calls her Tyra. She is in the 4th grade and the President of her class. She likes singing and dancing but most of all, she loves helping the planet. She hopes one day to create a worldwide charity called Evergreen. Her charity will help people in need, especially those who can't afford food and homes. It will also help to decrease pollution and solve environmental problems, teaching us not to take too much of something, such as

overfishing. She also dreams of working to investigate and fight corruption, discrimination, and harassment. She plans to try her hardest and her best to make these simple dreams an amazing reality.

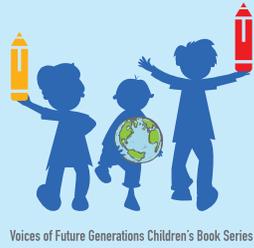


about the illustrator



Kasia Nieżywińska was born in Poland and moved to the UK some 25 years ago. Her background is in mathematics. She has worked as a teacher, a computer programmer and recently as a freelance illustrator. Her special interest is in creating images for children's books. She qualified with a MA Degree in Children's Book Illustration from Ruskin University in Cambridge. The ideas for her work come predominantly from her childhood memories, through which she recalls and sometimes imagines her own adventures. She loves telling stories and illustrating them.





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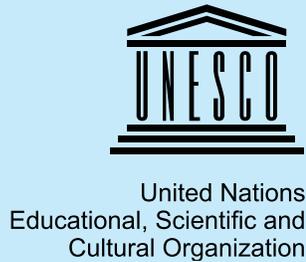
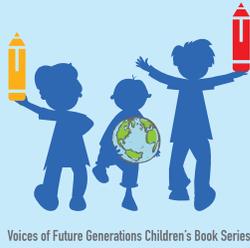
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The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

All children are holders of important human rights. Twenty-five years ago in 1989, over a hundred countries agreed a 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, being heard and involved in decisions. Especially, Article 24 and Article 27 defend children's rights to safe drinking water, good food, a clean and safe environment, health, quality of life. And 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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The UN Sustainable Development Goals

At the United Nations Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development in 2012, governments and people came together to find pathways for a safer, more fair, and greener world for all. Everyone agreed to take new action to end poverty, stop environmental problems, and build bridges to a more just future. In 283 paragraphs of *The Future We Want* Declaration, countries committed to defend human rights, steward resources, fight climate change and pollution, protect animals, plants and biodiversity, and look after oceans, mountains, wetlands and other special places.

In the United Nations, countries are committing to 17 new Sustainable Development Goals for the whole world, with targets for real actions on the ground. Clubs, governments, firms, schools and children have started over a thousand partnerships, and mobilized billions, to deliver. The future we want exists in the hearts and minds of our generation, and in the hands of us all.

— *Vuyelwa Kuuya*

Centre for International Sustainable Development Law (CISDL)



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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), Dr Marie-Claire Cordonier Segger (CISDL), Dr Kristiann Allen (New Zealand), Ms Irina Bokova (UNESCO), Mr Karl Hansen (Trust for Sustainable Living), Ms Emma Hopkin (UK), Dr Ying-Shih Hsieh (EQPF), Dr Maria Leichner-Reynal (Uruguay), Ms Melinda Manuel (PNG), Ms Julia Marton-Lefevre (IUCN), Dr James Moody (Australia), Ms Anna Oposa (The Philippines), Professor Kirsten Sandberg (UN CRC Chair), Ms Patricia Chaves (UN DSD), Dr Marcel Szabo (Hungary), Dr Christina Voigt (Norway), Ms Gabrielle Sacconaghi-Bacon (Moore Foundation), Ms Marcela Orvañanos de Rovzar (UNICEF Mexico) and others.

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. (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)

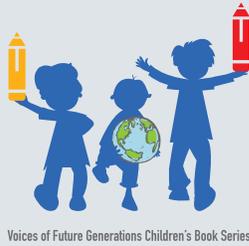
United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) provides leadership and encourages partnership in caring for the environment by inspiring, informing, and enabling nations and peoples to improve their quality of life without compromising that of future generations. (www.unep.org)

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.cisd.org)

Trust for Sustainable Living and its Living Rainforest Centre exist to further the understanding of sustainable living in the United Kingdom and abroad through high-quality education. (www.livingrainforest.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 transdisciplinary resources to push forward environmental and sustainable development in our time.



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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.













It is a long way from Papua New Guinea to the United Nations General Assembly in New York for a nine-year-old, but Tyra is no ordinary girl. The gold certificate that she was awarded there for this wonderful story is something she should surely feel very proud of.

Alexander Rheeney

Editor, Post Courier Newspaper, Papua New Guinea

Tyra writes with intelligence on the issues facing women and girls in her home country and around the world. This is a wonderful book, which gets to the heart of gender equality as a crucial part of the Convention of the Rights of the Child.

Professor Kristen Sandberg

Former Chair, UN Commission on the Rights of the Child

It is a pleasure to see this inspirational book as part of the Voices of Future Generations children's book series. Beautifully written, it contains lessons that we all can learn from.

Professor Marcel Szabó

Commissioner for Future Generations, Hungary

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