



Joytun, age 13, has been through hell and back. She was working in a bread factory and was quite hungry, so the owner sent her to the kitchen to get some food. While eating, her scarf caught fire on a cooking flame, setting her whole body in flames from her face to her hips. She received some treatment and help at a missions hospital. However, Joytun and her mother fled before receiving more treatment. The nuns running the hospital wanted to send Joytun abroad to receive plastic surgery to continue her healing, but her mother feared they would try to have someone overseas adopt her. Without further treatment, Joytun is severely limited by what she can do now for work. Her skin doesn't have elasticity because she needs skin grafts for full healing. Joytun once had dreams. Now this teenager has resigned herself to believe she will likely marry a man who will beat her because she feels too ugly and poor to hope for a man who will be good to her. But something positive is happening for Joytun as she looks forward to attending World Vision's Child Friendly Learning and Recreation Center (CFLRC) to receive more education.



Basir, 13, is in fifth grade at school and has the responsibility to take water to his home. In rural Afghanistan, it's often young boys who are responsible for fetching water, which can be a whole day's hard work.

"I grabbed the cart with four jerry cans and went to the stream. Due to drought, the stream water was very low. It took an hour to fill the jerry cans. With a lot of effort, I filled the cans and carried them home," said Basir.

This was his routine, which took two hours to fetch water. When he returned home, he was very tired and weary and could not do his homework. "I was very tired and went to sleep. Next day, my teacher in school punished me for not doing my homework," said Basir.

The river water Najk villagers collect is often dirty and contaminated by trash and feces, which exposes them to water-borne diseases. But by constructing a new water supply network, funded by World Vision, Basir's trek was shortened significantly, and he is happy to do his homework on time.

Improving access to clean drinking water was one of the activities that reduced the displacement of Afghan people and encouraged the return of formerly displaced people. Now, fetching drinking water has become a source of recreation for Naik's children.



Zhu, a 16-year-old sponsored child in China, is pictured on her long walk to and from school, which is two to three hours each way. Children from this remote area often stay at school during the week and go home on Fridays to spend the weekend with their families. Zhu has been making this trek since she was 7 years old, sometimes on her own. During winter and the wet season, the journey is difficult. The roads are slippery, and many of the children, including Zhu, have slipped and injured themselves. Many children don't have proper footwear, making them prone to falling. But they press on despite the hardship because of their strong desire to finish school.

Most of the families in Zhu's village are farmers growing corn and vegetables which they eat themselves and supply to the market to sell. Parents traditionally do not earn much, so they find it difficult to provide for their children's school needs.



Armando Medina, 16, fled hunger and increasingly desperate conditions in Venezuela nearly two years ago. He had to leave behind his friends, family, and the home he loved to seek a better life in Colombia. His dad had left the family, and it became too difficult for Armando and his mom to make ends meet. They decided to join Armando's older brother in Colombia, but life continues to be a daily struggle. They slept on the ground for the first month here. His mom has taken various temporary jobs but is currently unemployed. Armando was in the sixth grade when they moved here. Right now, he's taking courses to get the Colombian equivalent of his GED. Armando shares that much of their experience here has been embittered by xenophobia and discrimination. But that's why he's drawn to World Vision's Child Friendly Spaces and the workshops they offer. "Many people say we're thieves," Armando says. "Some days I wake up well. Some days not so well."

"The thing is, here [in the Child Friendly Space], I haven't been discriminated against."



Muombi, 15, was separated from her mother when her family fled fighting in their village. Then abandoned by her older brother, she now lives with family friends in the Mugunga IDP (Internally Displaced Person) camp in Goma, Democratic Republic of Congo. Every day Muombi goes into the forest in search of food, exposing herself to risks such as violence and abuse.

"My mother ran away. I don't know where she went. The last time I saw her was during the war ... I was taking care of the house, and she went into the forest to collect some things. The war immediately started — and I never saw her again. For a while I lived with my older brother, who has six children. We didn't have a house, and I wasn't going to school. Eventually, I decided to come to the camp looking for life. That was two months ago.

Every day I wake up very early in the morning and go to the forest to collect wood. When I come back, I sell it to make some money. One time I got 1000 Congolese Francs (US\$2). I eat once a day, always potatoes and fish. I feel okay. The main problem I have is the hardness of life. Even if I'm sick, even if I'm hungry, I am doomed to go to the forest to look for something so that I can eat. I would like to go back home; I think that may be possible soon. One day I dream I could do a job like selling flowers," says Muombi.

In partnership with the World Food Programme, World Vision distributes food in the camp. Families receive a monthly supply of maize meal, rice, beans, vegetable oil, salt, and other staple foods.



A group of boys who work in automobile shops around the city of Khulna, Bangladesh, are now able to attend World Vision's Child Friendly Learning and Recreation Center (CFLRC). At the center, the boys will learn life skills as well as about the dangers of trafficking and their rights.

Islam (second from left in brown sweater), age 14, wishes he could go to school like the other kids in his community. At this point, he's been working for five years at an auto shop and has forgotten everything he learned in school before he had to drop out. He works for about 12 to 14 hours a day and makes about 2,000 taka (nearly \$25) a month to help support his family. His mom works 14 hours a day as a domestic laborer to earn 1,000 taka (\$12.50) a month.

Islam has been attending the World Vision Child Friendly Learning and Recreation Center for about 10 days. He hopes to learn how to read and write and do basic math at the center so that he can one day have his own auto shop. If he can learn those things and get about three to four more years of training, he could make about 35,000 taka (\$437) a month, and that is his life's goal now.



"Lea"*, 18, poses for a portrait at the rebound center operated by World Vision in Butembo, Democratic Republic of Congo.

"I was abducted by Mai Mai militia and was a child soldier for three years. One day I escaped. I asked for permission to go for a walk and ran away. Luckily, they didn't catch me."

"At the center I'm doing sewing classes. I really like it. I have many friends here now. I want to learn to sew properly. I hope one day to have my own shop and provide for my child. I want my child to go to school, that's my first wish. I don't want him to be illiterate like me."

The Rebound Center in Butembo is supported by World Vision International. The focus is on children and young people in Eastern Congo who have been injured and traumatized by armed conflict.

*Not her real name.



A baby waits to be examined by a nurse at the Katunda Health Center in Luampa district, Zambia.

Some people walk up to 20 kilometers (12.4 miles) from their homes to get to the clinic. Even though the Katunda Health Center serves a population of 9,141 people, the government only supplies medicines for less than half of the population. This means critical drugs are often in short supply as stocks run low. During the rainy season in western Zambia—November to April—clinics tend to see huge increases in cases of malaria along with and varying severities of respiratory infections, including pneumonia.

World Vision pharmaceutical GIK (gifts-in-kind) helps rural clinics like the Katunda Health Center by providing most-needed drugs such as antiretroviral drugs for HIV/AIDS, antimalarials, deworming tablets, tuberculosis drugs, blood pressure drugs, Vitamin A supplements, and antibiotics.



Sonam, left, is pictured with her friend in an alley of the slum in North Delhi. Now 12, she started begging when she was 8 years old due to hunger in her family. Because of the time spent begging for a few coins every day, Sonam wasn't able to attend school. World Vision has established a non-formal school in a slum near an underpass in North Delhi. It provides the children like Sonam, who would not normally go to school, with an accessible education that helps them catch up with their peers. When they are caught up, they can begin a formal education in a government school. World Vision also gave Sonam a sewing machine, and she is gradually learning how to sew as a trade.



At age 18, Mandela Nelson stands at an important stage in his life. Though his past was bloodied with violence, his present holds big dreams, and his future is filled with uncertainty. Mandela is a South Sudanese refugee living in Uganda.

South Sudanese refugees have faced a great deal of violence over the past years. Men, women, and children are being shot. It's a disturbing reality just how much violence children have had to face, witness, and be affected by.

"I have two dreams in life," Mandela says. "One, I want to be a doctor like my father. Two, I find machines very interesting and want to be an engineer."

Mandela was in class Senior 3 when he recently had to drop out of school. His family can't afford to send all eight children to school and pay the school fees of 97,000 Ugandan shillings (\$26) for Mandela's senior class. Yet, at this crucial stage in life, filled with dreams, aspirations, uncertainties, and questions, Mandela Nelson is not the only one standing on the threshold of an uncertain future. Uganda alone has more than 800,000 South Sudanese refugees.



Last March Nexi graduated as valedictorian of her class. Due to the challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, she did not receive her award in person. That has not deterred her from plans to continue her education. She is determined to study hard and become an engineer someday.



Children in La Guajira, Colombia, are facing secondary impacts and risks due to mandatory isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic. Many girls and boys lack access to financial resources and items to meet their basic needs. Children and youth who are out of school are now more exposed to the possibility of malnutrition, abuse, mistreatment, and violence.

To address these needs, World Vision and the United Nations' Education Cannot Wait have implemented a project called "Access to Quality Education." The project has delivered 285 hygiene kits, food packages, and educational materials, as well as 5,700 water purifiers donated by Procter & Gamble (P&G) to the most vulnerable families, mountain migrant populations, Colombia returnees, and host families.

The project offers love and hope to the children. Even in the midst of a difficult context, Edward (shown in the photo above) keeps his spirit up. He knows that World Vision will provide school materials. He often asks about his schoolteacher and speaks very fondly of her. Edward shares that he misses her a lot and wants to go back to school soon. Because he loves to paint, Edward knows that World Vision's arrival to his community means that he will be able to participate in more activities to keep learning with fun and joy.



Andrea, 23, was raised in one of Romania's orphanages that are infamously known for the poor care given to the children. She is one of tens of thousands who bear the psychological and social scars of a childhood without love. As a child, Andrea and the others learned to rock themselves because no one was there to comfort them.

After she was born, her mother ran from the hospital leaving behind newborn Andrea. When she turned 18, the orphanage released her to the streets. The only things she took with her were the few possessions she owned and her rage, which had built over two decades of being locked in crowded rooms with other unwanted children. She stood on the unfamiliar street, utterly unprepared for life. Andrea had never been to a grocery store or handled money. She had no idea how to cook a meal or wash her clothes. She had no job skills, no place to live, and no ability to access social services.

When child protection reform became a government priority, World Vision was invited to participate in the process and influenced innovative and sweeping legislation that passed in 1997. To protect young people like Andrea, World Vision created Hope House. Andrea lived at Hope House for more than two years, learning skills and anger management to help her transition to life on her own. Now three crosses dangle on cords around her neck, a constant reminder of the most precious truth Andrea says she learned.



Thirteen-year-old sponsored child Nahomy Yasmin Mejai Reyes hugs her father, Javier. She is the youth mayor of Yamaranguila and already a child rights advocate and community organizer in her Honduras community. Nahomy campaigned and was elected by students all over the municipality, winning twice as many votes as the other candidates.

She encourages her peers to build up their community through service. Nahomy faces difficult subjects head on, campaigning against early marriage and teen pregnancy. When children drop out of school, Nahomy goes with the municipal child protection officer to talk to their parents and help them find solutions.

Nahomy lived with her grandparents for six years after her father migrated for work. But now he has returned, and she draws on all the strength of her family's love and the support of teachers and mentors to be a beacon of hope for others.

"I want to be a doctor and start the first clinic in my community, La Puerta," says Nahomy. "To me, being educated means that I can take care of my family and my community, especially my grandparents and father who have sacrificed so much to give me opportunities."