Welcome to your new edition of Living Unbound! We’ve updated the publication to reflect the realities and wisdom of the broader Unbound global community, featuring striking visuals and wide-ranging perspectives from sponsored individuals, their families, sponsors and staff. You’ll receive Living Unbound annually in the
Framed by an abandoned train tunnel in El Salvador, 11-year-old sponsored child Tatiana stands proudly in her school uniform.

BELOW: In Kenya, Eunice and Joseph (center) enjoy time with their children, (from left) Monica, John, Peter and Samuel. Monica and Samuel are sponsored through Unbound. Read the story of the family and their growing business, starting on page 15.

fall instead of twice yearly, which saves on printing and mailing costs. We’re also developing more digital content, featuring stories in video, photo, audio and narrative formats. Go to Unbound.org/LivingUnbound to check it out.
A new Unbound platform called Agents of Change helps support the kind of stable, safe and life-giving communities where people thrive instead of just survive.

Agents of Change makes community development grants available to established Unbound parents groups so they can make improvements and enhancements in their communities. It’s an innovative way to support people’s investment in the neighborhoods, towns and villages where their families are rooted.

“Eliminating extreme poverty from our world will require increasingly targeted and tailored approaches,” Dan Pearson, Unbound’s director of international programs, said. “It will require greater participation and control by the communities themselves. We need their expertise and ideas.”

Once a parent group has identified a common need — installing a bathroom at a school, restoring a community
soccer field, building a covered waiting area outside a health clinic — they complete an application process that includes an analysis of projected costs and existing resources along with a plan for completion.

The maximum grant amount is $500 per group. In many instances, groups have leveraged that support with volunteer help and other resources available in their communities. In 2018, Unbound awarded $300,000 in Agents of Change grants, funding initiatives in seven countries.

An initiative in Uganda illustrates the impact groups can make when they have a platform to identify problems and devise solutions. Expectant mothers in some of Uganda’s rural communities had a dilemma: They could walk, sometimes for miles, to the local clinic and wait in the sun or rain to see a doctor or they could stay home. Not surprisingly, many were choosing the latter. As a result, they weren’t receiving adequate prenatal care.

Three parent groups participating in Unbound’s program in Kampala decided to change that. They each applied for an Agents of Change grant and used those funds to help improve the overall quality of local health care facilities. Covered outpatient waiting areas were constructed outside of clinics in all three communities.

“Our pregnant mothers, they have a shelter,” Alice Namutebi, a health center staff member, said. “When it’s raining we don’t have any worry, when it’s the rainy season or sun season, because they have [a place] to sit and each wait to be attended to.”
In communities challenged by extreme poverty, what’s broken and missing can be overwhelming. Part of creating effective change is gaining an understanding of what assets are available, from a local perspective, and building from there. This process is aided by a tool called Community Resource Mapping (CRM).

Mothers in Unbound’s Trichy program in south India participated in CRM. Using kolam, a traditional form of drawing with dyed rice flour, the mothers created a community map, noting houses, water access, medical and educational resources, and other neighborhood features.

They analyzed goods coming into and out of the community, drawing import and export pie charts alongside the map. Starting with strengths, they identified gaps, and from gaps, they identified business opportunities.

Seventy women have been able to start and sustain their own businesses as a result the mapping efforts.

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**35 YEARS OF SPONSORING ELDERS**

This year marks Unbound’s 35th year working with the elderly. Forbes.com featured our elder program in a July 2019 story, and 23 sponsored elders’ stories were featured in Pope Francis’ book “Sharing the Wisdom of Time,” which debuted last year. Visit unbound.org/elder to learn more.

**SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM EXPANDS TO RWANDA**

Unbound will begin sponsorships of children in Rwanda next year. With the addition of Rwanda as a program country, Unbound’s presence in East Africa expands to five countries. Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya and Madagascar comprise our other program countries in the region. Rwanda is the first program country added globally since sponsorships began in Tanzania in 2004.

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**THE ART OF ingenuity**
From our reading list:

A group of staff members at Unbound formed a book club focusing on topics of international development and creative approaches to fighting poverty. These recommendations are from their reading list.

“THE TASTE OF MANY MOUNTAINS”

“The Taste of Many Mountains” is the first novel by Bruce Wydick, an economist who has studied impacts of child sponsorship, microfinance and education, among other things. Based on an actual research project, the story follows four graduate students who travel to Guatemala to study the effects of fair trade versus free trade on coffee growers. This is a beautifully written book that talks about Mayan culture, the suffering of the people, poverty and globalization, while following the journey from Guatemala’s Western Highlands all the way to a cafe in San Francisco.

— Nimisha Poudyal, international programs evaluation specialist

“BEHIND THE BEAUTIFUL FOREVERS”

In “Behind the Beautiful Forevers,” Pulitzer Prize winning journalist Katherine Boo documents the lives of neighbors in a Mumbai slum over the course of three years. The title comes from an advertisement promising “beautiful forevers,” which is on a wall that separates the slum from affluent airport travelers. The book chronicles the lives of real people on the other side as they strive to improve their situations. The diversity of stories of the families depicted and the events that take place challenge preconceptions and lead to a deeper, more complex understanding of poverty.

— Becky Findley, international evaluations manager
Make sure you have all the necessary travel documents before you book your flight. Each country has its own entry requirements for things like passport expiration dates, visas and entry fees. The State Department’s travel page, travel.state.gov, is a great resource.

You may need to provide your itinerary and local contact information upon entering a country, so print a few copies before you go.

A good pair of walking shoes and a raincoat are musts. Avoid expensive clothes, jewelry, electronics or accessories. Research how locals dress, as clothes that are acceptable in the U.S. may be inappropriate. Bring layers! You may experience a wide range of temperatures.

Looking for adventure and a chance to see sponsorship in action? Travel with Unbound! Find out more at unbound.org/trips.
Notify your bank and credit card companies of your travel plans. Most banks can exchange currency if given several weeks’ notice, or you can exchange money at the destination airport. It’s a good idea to have enough cash for any fees, snacks and souvenirs. Remember, not all merchants accept credit cards.

Stick to bottled or purified water and avoid uncooked fruits and vegetables. Check out the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website, cdc.gov/travel, for food and water safety information. The CDC also provides advice on vaccines, medicines and more.

**USE OUR PACKING LIST FOR YOUR UPCOMING TRIPS!**

- Passport
- Clothes to cover knees and shoulders
- Long-sleeved and short-sleeved tops
- Comfortable walking shoes
- Rain poncho or rain jacket
- Sweater, sweatshirt and/or jacket
- Sunglasses and hat
- Earplugs (as sleep aids)
- Small flashlight
- Travel umbrella
- Hand fan and handkerchief
- Electrical converter and adapter
- Toiletries
- Medications
- Reading materials
- Camera supplies
- A map of the country you’re visiting
Human beings have an inherent need to love and care for others, as much as they need to feel loved and cared for. For many of us, pets give us that chance and have become an integral part of our families.

Around the world, families in Unbound have different kinds of pets. Some are regal like Ramses the fluffy dog, sassy like the scraggly little dog Princesa (left), or slow and quiet like Willy the turtle. Dogs, especially, have important responsibilities in their families. They protect the house when family members are away, bark
at night to alert that somebody is outside or accompany their owners along the many miles walked to sell goods on the streets. Cats, too, do vital work by keeping critters away from homes.

In spite of the difficult realities in which the families of Unbound live, they have space in their homes, hearts and lives for a pet. They may not be able to provide special food, but a tortilla with a little bit of lunch leftovers makes for a good meal. They may not have enough to bring their pets to the groomer for a haircut and bath, but a swim in the community river is just as good.

No matter where in the world you live, coming home and being welcomed by a pet evokes a sense of love that has no language or nationality.

To see Ramses the dog, Willy the turtle and sponsored friends with their other pets, go to unbound.org/pets.
Clay cooking stoves, newly made by husband and wife team Joseph and Eunice, lie curing in the equatorial sun.
Families earn a living as entrepreneurs

One of the pillars of Unbound is a belief that those facing barriers of poverty hold the answers on how to improve their situations. Sponsors and Unbound help by providing resources and a supportive community to encourage them.

The stories that follow show how individuals and families around the globe combine their ingenuity, entrepreneurial spirit, hard work and support from sponsors to meet the needs of their families and communities.

Creating their own opportunity

In Kenya, most families use firewood as their main source of energy. However, a nationwide ban on logging and timber harvesting led Joseph and Eunice of the Nairobi area to venture into the business of making energy-efficient cooking stoves. Through a loan Eunice received from her Unbound mothers group, she and her husband were able to buy the raw materials needed to make portable stoves that they sell in Nairobi and surrounding towns.

Prior to managing the family stove business, Joseph worked as a driver earning an average of 500 Kenyan shillings a day, the equivalent of $5 in the U.S. Now, according to Joseph, the family sells up to 30 stoves a day for 200 Kenyan shillings per stove. Their business has grown to the point that they now employ seven other people in the neighborhood, and some of them also have children in the Unbound program.

“We tried to get loans from traditional banks but we did not have any collateral,” Joseph said. “But [at Unbound] we did not need collateral. The collateral is yourself.”
Fifteen mothers started a small store out of a local Unbound office in Quezon City, Philippines. Now, five years later, they’re operating a consumer co-op with 240 members.

While the store has evolved, its mission has remained the same: Uplift families in the community by offering goods at low costs. The group members saved for one year to raise the initial capital of 1,200 Philippine pesos (roughly $24 USD) each.

Then, with a matching grant from Unbound, they were able to open the store and sell products at discounted rates, including food to sponsored elders and school supplies to Unbound scholars.

Joseph and Eunice are the parents of four children, two of whom are sponsored through Unbound. They live in a rural community on the outskirts of Nairobi. In addition to the support the family received to start their business, the couple credits Unbound for helping their oldest child, Monica, attend college to pursue a journalism degree.

“We would like to thank the sponsors of our children because, as you can see, there are no factories where we live that we can go for work,” Joseph said. “We had to take up casual jobs and it was very hard to pay for school fees before Unbound.”

Joseph and Eunice have hopes that their family business will keep growing so they can continue supporting their children’s education.

Married couple Joseph and Eunice in Kenya started a stove-making business, financed by a loan from the local Unbound mothers group where Eunice belongs. The business has greatly improved the family’s income.
Another advantage to becoming a legal consumer co-op, a milestone the group achieved last March, is that families can take out product loans. They can borrow up to 500 pesos (roughly $9.80 USD) worth of supplies at 0% interest, and they have a short amount of time to pay it back.

“When we don’t have enough money we can borrow from the store, and then the store attendant will list our names and we’ll pay it back as soon as possible,” Elenita said.

Elenita’s mothers group meets weekly and members take turns managing the store. They also host a general assembly every year and distribute profits equally among all 240 co-op members. Elenita says she and her fellow co-operators are just getting started.

“Our dream is to have more investors and become a department store,” she said. “With the help of Unbound and the staff maybe someday, somehow.”
For Jafet, a 21-year-old university student and entrepreneur from Bolivia, tackling obstacles is nothing new. The middle child of nine, Jafet was born blind in a rural area with few resources for children with disabilities.

About 15 years ago, Jafet, his brother Rodrigo, who is also blind, and his mother, Martha, moved from the rural countryside to El Alto, just outside the capital city of La Paz, to gain greater access to educational opportunities. Over time, the rest of Martha’s children moved to the city while her husband stayed behind to cultivate their land.

Jafet was sponsored through Unbound about 10 years ago, which helped relieve some of the financial pressure on the family. Although Martha earned an income washing clothes and doing housework, they struggled to meet their daily needs.

Asking his mom for help with materials and other school costs beyond what sponsorship could cover was a nonstarter for Jafet. He knew that, as much as she wanted to help, his mom simply didn’t have the funds. So he came up with his own solutions.

First Jafet secured a job at a local radio station, memorizing the locations of the various audio controls. Next, he pitched a radio broadcast to his university station and developed an educational program for youth that covered a variety of topics, such as children’s rights and responsibilities. He realized a computer would help him complete his social communications degree coursework, so he saved his money and Unbound sponsorship benefits for a year to purchase one with programs that narrate the images and words onscreen for blind users.

Jafet’s radio work revealed more opportunities. He began recording advertising spots for local businesses and mixing and recording music. In time, he was able to rent a small storefront next to his home where he sells music and a small selection of food and drinks. He advises young people facing challenges to stay focused on their goal.

“There are many problems in life,” Jafet said. “Life is like a road and we stumble and fall ... but you have to keep fighting and somehow you have to get ahead. Fight, and get what you dream.”

— Jafet, 21, Bolivia
Jafet, a sponsored young man from Bolivia, moves through the small store he operates next to his home. Refusing to be limited by his blindness, Jafet has a specially equipped computer, purchased partly with sponsorship funds.
Alona Hungco, an Unbound staff member in Antipolo, Philippines, teaches a group of Dumagat women. A member of the Dumagats herself, Alona works to help community members understand their legal rights and preserve their ancestral heritage.
Unbound works with indigenous communities around the world, recognizing their considerable contributions like care for the environment and preservation of cultures, while supporting them in their efforts to overcome poverty.

Indigenous groups aim to gain recognition of their identities, ways of life, and rights to traditional lands and natural resources, but have historically faced discrimination, according to the U.N.’s promotion of International Day of the World’s Indigenous Peoples.

There are an estimated 370 million indigenous people worldwide. While they make up less than 5% of the global population, according to the U.N., they comprise 15% of people with the fewest economic resources.

Unbound seeks to work with indigenous communities in a way that respects their self-determination in coming up with solutions to poverty. The following stories highlight accomplishments of people from indigenous communities in the Philippines and Kenya.
Remegia doesn’t care if people say she’s old, she still wants to learn how to read and write. As a member of the Dumagat indigenous community in the Philippines, education was out of reach for her growing up.

In fact, before Unbound partnered with this indigenous tribe, they didn’t have any formal schooling because of distance, fear and discrimination. Now Remegia and her classmates of all ages are learning how to read and write in an integrated literacy program in their community.

“It feels good that I am now able to write my name. It was like a precious gift for me,” said Remegia, 66, who, at this writing, was on the waiting list for sponsorship. “I keep on persevering to learn these things because I feel like it will make me complete as a human being.”
On Fridays and Saturdays, Dumagat students gather in an outdoor classroom on their ancestral land eager to learn. In addition to reading, writing and counting, Alona Hungco, 27, one of the teachers who is a Dumagat community member herself, focuses on indigenous peoples’ rights and sustainable development — lessons critical to the future of their tribe.

“We observe that visitors come and go from our areas, not knowing that they are already acquiring parts of our ancestral domain by manipulating documents and people around,” said Alona, a former sponsored beneficiary who’s now a staff member of Unbound’s Antipolo program. “If everyone has enough knowledge, we can all prevent that from happening.”

Through the Dumagat school, the tribe is also able to keep their history and native language alive. For these cultural lessons, Alona takes a seat and the teacher becomes a student.

“I don’t speak our own language because of civilization, and we almost had forgotten our culture and our dialect,” Alona said. “But when the [Unbound Integrated Literacy Program] came, little by little our children and youth were able to learn and value our own dialect, culture and traditions.”
The Maasai: Creating their own change

Helen, from the Maasai community in Kenya, has big ambitions for her family. The 30-year-old mother of three wants to educate her children, earn more from her beadwork and build a house to replace the traditional, single-room mud home where her family lives now.

She’s taking small steps to make it all happen, including saving every Kenyan shilling she can for housing materials. When her house is built, Helen said, “I will feel good. I imagine a big house with several bedrooms, a sitting room, a bathroom and a kitchen.”

The Maasai community where Helen lives began working with Unbound in 2017. They started with 25 families and 10 elders. At this writing, there were 10 more children waiting for a sponsor. Recognized worldwide for their rich culture, the Maasai are a pastoral people who live in the East Africa regions of southern Kenya and northern Tanzania. They’re known for their artistry, especially their intricate beadwork, distinctive dress and hunting skills.

Traditionally Maasai men, including Helen’s husband, William, are herdsmen. As population growth and urban sprawl push the Maasai off their pastoral lands, young men have sought jobs in the city, often providing security in tourist areas. Women typically take care of the family, home and animals. Helen and others in her
community also sell their beadwork to tourists at the market in Nairobi.

After her 11-year-old daughter, Patricia, was sponsored, Helen joined the local Unbound mothers group and eventually took out a loan of 10,000 Kenyan shillings, about $97 in the U.S. She used the money to buy more beads for her business.

Since her daughter was sponsored by Frank and Mimi in Virginia, Helen has used sponsorship support to pay for school fees, uniforms and books. She also purchased bedding, a gas cooker so her family doesn’t have to breathe smoke from firewood, and a solar lamp so they don’t have to worry about running out of kerosene.

The family’s efforts, combined with sponsorship support, have led to “a big change,” Helen said. She especially appreciates that she’s able to create a budget and use the money in ways she deems most beneficial.

Unbound social worker Mercy Njeri said mothers come up with their own development plans rather than the organization dictating solutions. “With decentralized decision-making, the mothers are able to do a lot,” she said.

Helen wants to share that good news with sponsors. “I would like sponsors to know that through their support families are able to pay school fees and meet their needs,” she said.
The people sponsored through Unbound live in places that are often as rugged as they are beautiful. They reside in isolated rural villages, on mountaintops, at the edges of forests, in massive cities and all sorts of other locations. Their homes are sometimes surrounded by the most breathtaking landscapes one can imagine, but these locales aren’t just to enjoy. They’re to get through and around, back and forth — on foot, by boat, motorbike, jeepney or tuk tuk — for whatever necessity dictates.

Jeralyn is a 10-year-old girl from the Philippines who twice daily crosses a 275-foot hanging bridge over a river to go to school. “I sometimes get scared [on] that bridge because it is shaking,” she said. Her mother sees it differently. “Before we have this hanging bridge, we cross the river by walking,” she said. “We get wet every time and if the water rises because of rain, we cannot pass through, so they can’t go to school. We are very thankful that we have this hanging bridge now.”
Life in communities where Unbound works must always be measured by time, not so much by clocks and calendars but by how long it takes to get from here to there and back again.

Sandra is the mother of Christopher, a 12-year-old sponsored boy. Their family lives near Lake Atitlan in Guatemala. Sandra sells woven fabrics in a town across the lake. Twice a week, she travels 30 minutes by boat and then walks more than half a mile to board a bus that will take her to the marketplace where she works. Later in the day, she’ll do it all again in reverse. The round trip costs nearly $5, a sizable sum for a family working to overcome poverty.
Time, it’s said, is money, and nowhere is that truer than in places where distance creates obstacles for people with few resources. According to worldbank.org, “An estimated one billion people in low-income countries still lack access to an all-weather road. In many cities, time lost to congestion erodes prosperity. High mobility costs cut the disposable income of the poor who often lack reliable and affordable public transportation.”

Unbound regional reporter Oscar Tuch provided a lesson in the economics of transportation in Guatemala. In the rural areas, costs for the various modes of transportation are inconsistent and unpredictable, which makes it difficult for families to budget for them. “Another factor is the hazardous road conditions, which damage the vehicles traveling by land,” he said. The greater the expenses for vehicle maintenance and repair, the higher the transportation costs are likely to be.
Public transportation around the world has its dangers. People are injured in traffic accidents, often caused by poor road conditions. Buses are overcrowded and passengers aren’t always secure. Sexual assaults are common. Street gangs extort money from bus drivers and passengers. Poverty breeds vulnerability. According to worldbank.org, “More than 1.25 million people are killed and up to 50 million are injured on the world’s roads every year. Low and middle-income countries account for 90% of the deaths although they own just half the world’s motor vehicles.”

Risk, like time, distance and relentless necessity, is never far from the consciousness of those who, daily, must navigate their way through a beautiful but sometimes harsh world.
Ten years ago, I stood alongside my parents at the back of church, staring down at a table full of faces. Each profile was of an individual seeking a “life empowerment partner.” Most of the photos were of children, but the profile that caught my eye was of Zenaida, a 59-year-old widow from the Philippines.

We had just heard a presentation by an Unbound priest visiting our parish, Church of the Risen Christ in Denver. He called us to join in the mission of empowering an individual to live to their fullest, God-given potential. I believe God was calling us to empower Zenaida. So began our sponsorship and our friendship.

At the time, I was an independent 26-year-old, and Unbound was so appealing because it was built on individual empowerment. I found this inspiring, and I could relate to it so personally.

For the next decade, we exchanged letters, photos, stories and prayers with Zenaida. We often heard about Unbound activities and how she used her sponsorship benefits. I loved hearing from her, but I wanted to know more about her life.

While I hadn’t previously given much thought to traveling with Unbound, I didn’t pause for a second when I heard about the February 2019 trip to the Philippines. When I finally met Zenaida I was overwhelmed.

I learned so much more about my good friend. More importantly, I became aware of the opportunities that Zenaida had opened up for herself because she felt we believed in her.

I now know that human potential — when tapped, supported and provided with opportunity and self-determination — is boundless. ✨
Unbound is committed to ensuring that programs make a positive difference in the lives of children, youth, elders and families around the world. As a result, learning is the focus of ongoing program evaluation. Here are snapshots from two recent evaluations concerning elders and family empowerment.

Better together
Sponsored elders were more engaged socially than their peers on Unbound’s waiting list.

Free to decide
Parents of sponsored children chose to be more involved in the decision-making process in their communities compared to parents of children on the waiting list for sponsorship.

Employing talent
More Unbound parents reported being self-employed compared to parents on the waiting list. Fewer Unbound parents said they were unemployed compared to parents who have yet to participate in the sponsorship program.

In countries around the world, mothers of different faith traditions are bonding over their common experience as members of the Unbound community. International Program Director Pritha Hariharan shares her observations about this hopeful trend in India and the Philippines. Read her reflection at unbound.org/voices.
READ ONLINE:

WHEN LOVE OF THE GAME BECOMES THE OPPORTUNITY OF A LIFETIME

Damián went from sponsored child in the Unbound program to training for a career in professional baseball. Go to unbound.org/baseball to read about his hopes to make it to the big leagues.