

***Green Girls:***  
***storie vere di ragazze dalla parte del pianeta***

**Green Girls:**  
**true stories of young women fighting for the planet**

by  
Christiana Ruggeri

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*Back cover:*

TRUE STORIES OF GIRLS  
FIGHTING FOR THE PLANET

THEY'RE YOUNG, DETERMINED, ENTHUSIASTIC,  
AND THEY HAVE A COMMON GOAL:  
SAVING THE EARTH.

They plant trees, defend sloths, and challenge governments. They protect the water and the air. They wake up every day and pick up trash or clean oil from the sea to save coral. Each of their stories is different, and they come from every corner of the planet. But all of them are examples of great courage, and love for our world and every living creature.

Illustrations by Susanna Rumiz

*Front cover:*

GREEN Girls

TRUE STORIES OF GIRLS  
FIGHTING FOR THE PLANET

*To my daughter.*

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## INTRODUCTION

### A TRIP AROUND THE WORLD WITH GIRL CLIMATE ACTIVISTS.

Girls who defend the environment and biodiversity of their local regions, the air, animals, water and the oceans. They live in famous metropolises, and some of the planet's remotest places, from the Amazon to indigenous reservations.

### THEY'RE YOUNG, SOMETIMES CHILDREN, WITH FRESH FACES AND ADULT DETERMINATION.

With a smile and determination, they fight for a clean future, for the health of everyone. And they reprimand the powerful and their own distracted peers. They win international awards and speak at the United Nations. They meet on the Web, in a virtuous, international green network that allows them to inform and mobilize hundreds of thousands of other young people and, more and more often, whole families.

### THEIR SELFIES ON SOCIAL MEDIA ARE A DENUNCIATION, THE CRY OF A WOUNDED NATURE THAT WE CAN HEED AND THEN HELP WITH CONCRETE DAILY CHOICES.

They're not much for controversy, but big on solutions. In some cases, they've been arrested, threatened by governments and institutions, bullied and harassed, but they don't give up and continue to expose people who resort to violence. And they're never alone, because they have their parents and environmentalist friends by their side, even "remotely."

### SOME CALL THEM #ENVIROKIDS, BUT WE HAVE EXPANDED THE FIELD: THEY'RE "GREEN GIRLS."

Launched into notoriety by Greta Thunberg and Fridays For Future, many of them were actually active long before. We tell the story of their battles because they address the 17 sustainable development goals of the United Nations. They are beautiful, determined warriors. Genuine "green pop" icons who are a source of inspiration to us all.

## THE 2030 AGENDA

Signed in 2015 by all countries belonging to the United Nations, **the 2030 Agenda** is a set of guidelines for governments, institutions, companies, schools, and for every one of us. It contains **17 goals** we need to pursue to avoid destroying our planet and ensure a way of life that's sustainable and respectful of the environment we depend on. The 17 goals are closely connected: the fight against inequality, poverty, and hunger and the defense of the environment, air, water, as well as of health and education. Every one of the Green Girls pursues specific goals and shows us good practices to help the Earth, the small but important actions every reader can adopt in their own daily life – at home, at school, with friends – to give us a healthier, greener future.

1. NO POVERTY
2. ZERO HUNGER
3. GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING
4. QUALITY EDUCATION
5. GENDER EQUALITY
6. CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION
7. AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY
8. DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH
9. INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE
10. REDUCED INEQUALITIES
11. SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES
12. RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION
13. CLIMATE ACTION
14. LIFE BELOW WATER
15. LIFE ON LAND
16. PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS
17. PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

## GLOSSARY

- **Paris Agreement:** agreement signed in 2015 by the Member States of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, with the goal of fighting global warming and climate change.
- **Activist:** person who takes an active role in promoting and supporting an ideal.
- **Climate Change:** alteration of the Earth's climate due to a variety of factors, including human behavior.
- **CO<sub>2</sub>:** carbon dioxide, a gas produced by fossil fuels that contributes to the Greenhouse Effect and global warming.
- **Fossil Fuels/Sources:** fuels such as oil, coal and natural gas that are formed by the decomposition of organic matter and constitute sources of polluting, non-renewable energy.
- **Renewable Energy:** energy sources that, unlike fossil fuels, don't pollute and don't run out (such as solar, wind and hydroelectric energy).
- **Fridays For Future:** international protest movement against climate change and global warming.
- **Greenhouse Gases:** gases present in the atmosphere that are able to hold in the heat emitted by the earth's surface, the clouds and the atmosphere, contributing to the so-called Greenhouse Effect.
- **Carbon Footprint:** amount of carbon produced by a given activity.
- **Influencer:** popular figure capable of influencing public opinion.
- **UN/United Nations:** international organization that promotes cooperation, good relations and peace between nations, and the respect for human rights.
- **Global Warming:** sudden increase in the temperature on planet Earth that began in the 19th century.
- **UNICEF:** UN fund responsible for protecting and safeguarding the rights of children.
- **Vegan:** those who exclude from their diet all foods of animal origin.

LILLY PLATT  
“LET’S CLEAN UP THE WORLD”

@lillyspickup @lillysplasticpickup

@lillys\_plastic\_pickup

@youthmundus - @plasticpollutes

#holland #netherlands #plasticfree #pickup #marinelitter #reusablewaterbottle

#plasticpollutioncoalition #stopchineselanterns

#globalshaker #anthropocene #mrcovid

Europe – Holland

At AGE 9 SHE DECLARES WAR ON PLASTIC. THANKS TO GRANDPA JIM, WHO TEACHES HER HOW DANGEROUS PLASTIC WASTE CAN BE TO THE ENVIRONMENT.

So, every day, when she gets back from school, Lilly posts a photo with the trash she picked up on the way on her social media profiles: “Lilly’s Plastic Pickup.” Her likable approach soon goes viral thanks to a video in which, armed with gloves and a trash claw, she challenges her peers: “Today we’re going to pick up plastic in a parking it, how about it, guys?” And she explains: “This is a fork, it’s called ‘throwaway plastic,’ don’t buy it, don’t use it, I don’t like it at all!”

Her passion for animals does the rest. A great number of them end up eating plastic, whether directly or indirectly, and in many cases, they die from swallowing it or getting trapped in it. A tragedy that’s absolutely avoidable, caused by the safety seal that every bottle has under its cap: once the bottle has been opened, the slender plastic circle slips off the bottle’s neck and, like a ring, becomes a noose around the neck of birds, fish and even reptiles. They get stuck inside it, aren’t able to free themselves, and end up dying by suffocation or the

inability to swallow water and food. So before throwing it into the recycling bin, activists like Lilly make sure to cut this seal so it can't do any harm. The advice is to drink from a reusable water bottle whenever possible, but if you have to drink from a plastic one, the important thing is to dispose of it correctly.

To denounce this tragedy, Lilly posts hundreds of photos of animal victims of plastic on social media. Her environmental lessons are broadcast far and wide and turn her into a green influencer.

“Despite the Coronavirus, plastic kills,” writes Lilly, as she shows a beached seal pup with a ghost net around its neck that's suffocating it. “Nature suffers because of our irresponsibility and dumping into the sea. This poor little guy was found on Ameland Island just in time. Fortunately, now he's safe.”

A few days later, she shows another, less fortunate creature, victim of a frisbee that strangled it.

Her photos are seen by thousands of kids who comprehend the damage caused by incivility and superficiality. But Lilly's constancy, despite her young age, is admired by many adults as well.

Born in 2008, she has big glasses, an intrepid spirit, a radiant smile, and a kind and friendly manner. People who discover her social media battles catch the bug and hit the streets, trash picker in hand.

Lilly shares her war on plastic with associations and activists around the world, such as the Plastic Pollution Coalition<sup>1</sup>. Lilly becomes one of their Child Ambassadors: “Plastic is a material that the Earth can't digest.”

The Dutch activist receives international awards and is chosen as a representative of still other environmentalist associations: “Global Youth Ambassador” of Youth Mundus, Plastic Pollutes, Wodi and Earth.org. She earns the title of “Global Shaker,” one of the young climate activists contributing to shake adults, often indecisive and distracted, out of their apathy. “I am a shaker!” she writes, showing her certificate.

The sea and marine waste are a constant theme in the Dutch girl's war on plastic, and she demonstrates the extent to which ocean floors are turning into receptacles for garbage. There's even a museum in Great Britain that's dedicated to the plastic toys that have been fished out of the sea, to teach children and parents the harm that an irresponsible act can cause. The Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford displays “artefacts of the Anthropocene<sup>2</sup>” and is

sponsored by the most famous “blocks” in the world, Lego®, these, too, often brought up from the deep.

On September 21, 2018, Lilly joins Fridays for Future. For two years she gets out and protests for the climate with Grandpa Jim by her side. And when the world comes to a stop, petrified by the pandemic, she writes:

*“The #coronavirus is actually acting for the climate. It’s a wake-up call. And people can see the results of what happens when we stop pollution. We can’t go back to the way it was before.”*

Due to the pandemic, young Lilly, like all the world’s environmentalists, transfers the protest from the streets to the web.

#ClimateStrikeOnline, #digitalstrike, #stayhome, #staysafe and above all #staypositive. Because if you look at the world with optimism, you can find solutions and put them into effect.

Lilly helps young people avoid types of behavior that, while apparently innocuous, in truth harm the environment. Like the use of Chinese lanterns, made from thin paper, wire and a small candle. Used for New Year’s celebrations, but also at parties, they’re increasingly widespread in the West and turn out to be a mortal danger for wildlife. Nocturnal birds, such as owls, are often attracted to and killed by these lanterns which, after concluding their flight, land in the sea and are mistaken for food by fish, or end up on the ground and turn into lethal traps for wild animals. Even British farmers have appealed to ban their use: “Lanterns represent a serious fire risk for forests and hay, and a danger for the animals that ingest their debris.”

Then there’s a new, devastating type of pollution, a byproduct of the Coronavirus pandemic itself: face masks and latex gloves that are dropped on the ground. Lilly posts her daily plastic pickup and shows how the number of masks she finds are increasing exponentially. She publishes photos of animals that are killed, or rescued from near-death, because of this new form of irresponsibility: from ducks to crocodiles, fish to all types of birds, badgers to foxes, bears to house pets. Trapped in plastic beer packaging, stuck in cans, suffocated by plastic bags and, now, victims of masks and their strings. “I just went for an afternoon walk,” Lilly reports. “Is anyone else worried about the pollution being caused by Mr. Covid?”

Lilly is certain that her generation is going in the right direction.

We must open our eyes, now more than ever, during the time of Covid-19.

“Being in isolation, we need to stay optimistic, #staypositive, and remember that even ordinary things can be special. Today I’m making tea. I found an easy recipe.”

And even in times of “social distancing,” she launches her recipe for saving the planet - the “5 Rs” against the use of throwaway plastic: recycle, reuse, renew, refill, and refuse to use plastic. And do it with a smile.

#lillysplasticpickup #stayhome #staysafe #stayhealthy

**1 - [bit.ly/2YAQOXB](https://bit.ly/2YAQOXB) – A global alliance of over 1,200 organizations, companies and leaders in 75 countries that work for a world free from plastic pollution and its toxic impact on human beings, animals, the ocean and the environment.**

**2 – The Anthropocene is the term used to describe the current geological era, characterized by the effects of human action on the planet.**

CATARINA LORENZO  
“FIGHTING FOR CORAL”

@atletacatarinalorenzo

#brazil #salvadordebahia #atlanticocean #coralreef #whitening #surf #oceanwarming  
#watercrisis  
#oilpollution #reading #books

SOUTH AMERICA / BRAZIL

*“I came here to change the world.”*

COURAGE AND IDEAS IN HER SPEECH AT THE UNITED NATIONS.

Born in 2008, Catarina is a Brazilian surfer who catches waves in Salvador de Bahia and sounds the alarm in support of her ocean: “It’s too warm, even the sand is warmer than before.”

Catarina became aware of the unusual temperature of the water and tells of the shock she felt the first time she noticed coral with white tips: “My father is a biologist and he told me that white coral are dead. I have to swim far away from the coral reef because it’s white and the pieces of coral break off and float in the water which, as you approach, gets warmer and warmer.”

The largest of Brazil’s six coral reefs is the one off the coast of Bahia. Here a large amount of coral has died due to the increase in water temperature, and disappearing along with it are hundreds of species of small fish, crustaceans and mollusks that used the coral for shelter.

Up to the 1980s, the phenomenon of whitening was rare. You might see coral whiten due to a loss of the vital algae that color them, but as soon as the temperature fell, the coral regained the algae and its color. In forty years, however, the phenomenon has increased to

such an extent that the coral don't have the time to regenerate themselves, requiring a period of at least 10-15 years.

"It's like cutting down a rainforest: the animals and plants that lived there die too," says Jelle Atema, Professor of Biology in the Marine Program at Boston University.

Catarina is deeply upset by her discovery, so she decides to do something about it. "Summers are increasingly warm, winters are increasingly cold, and the rain has shifted and diminished." What's more, there are water shortages in the summer; sometimes, they even shut it off for two or three days. Meaning that it's necessary to store extra water in view of the long, blazing summers.

"There are people who, during heat waves, have to ask their neighbors for water just to wash their dishes," explains Catarina, "because they don't have their own storage tanks."

The girl sees the climate changing before her eyes, the soil drying up. She sees the Amazon rainforest burning, and the conditions of the atmosphere getting even worse. "It makes me so sad that people are trying to destroy the trees, something that helps both them and the planet."

In March 2019, a tropical cyclone hits Bahia for the first time in recorded history, causing terrible flooding. Dozens of families lose their homes, and the huge waves drag people's boats out to sea.

Catarina denounces the government, accusing it of being ill-equipped to deal with climate change. "When it rains heavily in Salvador they open up the sewer system to help the water drain, which pours all types of waste, including dangerous ones, into the sea. Then, with the surf, this pollution gets washed up on the beach."

The increase in temperatures and the extreme climate worry Catarina, who dreams of becoming a surfer and is a climate activist because she cares about her future.

She trains 4 days a week with her board. "This catastrophe makes me incredibly sad. I go out into the water wearing boots, gloves and a mask. You can't go in without protection." And she adds: "I've taken a break from training on weekends; on those days, I clean oil out of the sea."

A California environmentalist asks Catarina's mother to have her talk about the coral in front of the UN. She's invited to give a speech, and her face appears alongside those of Greta and the other kids of Fridays for Future.

“I’m designing a project to save the coral. It’s still in the early stages, but it’s going to work.”

About Greta Thunberg she says: “She seems like a porcelain doll, but she’s kind and she always tells journalists to listen to us kids and let our voices be heard as well. She’s an incredible girl.”

Ever since, fighting for the environment has become even more important for Catarina. “Being an activist is normal. I’ve grown up surrounded by nature. I see how the climate has changed, how plants and animals are suffering.” And she adds: “Surfing is a part of my life. There are 30 surfers in my family.”

Catarina plans to dedicate a great deal of time to the ocean and to activism, and wants to get her degree. “My favorite subjects are the Sciences, Mathematics and Portuguese. Mom takes care of my program and the interviews, Dad handles my training.”

Then she confesses another one of her passions that she can’t do without: reading. “I read up to 8 books a month. Even during surfing season, I always have a book with me. I’m a big Harry Potter fan. If I could, I would read all day long.”

And she reminds the leaders of the world that they “must respect the limits of planet Earth. They can’t exploit natural resources and pollute the atmosphere as though all living creatures in the future, including children, won’t have any need for them.”

In December 2020, with the Coronavirus raging in Brazil, devastating entire communities, she participates remotely in the Youth Summit for the Ocean Decade, where she says: “Day one is today.”

LICYPRIYA KANGUJAM  
“FROM THE SUKIFU TO THE SOLAR-POWERED LAMP”

@LicypriyaK

@Licypriya4Planet - @TheChildMovement

@licypriyakangujam

#india #climateactivist #worldchildrenpeaceprize #un #tedxspeaker

#cleanair #earthdaynetwork #risingstar #childmovement

#climateliteracy #stopfossilfuels #airpollution

ASIA - INDIA

“THE PLANT YOU CAN WEAR IS A KIT THAT COSTS NOTHING TO BUILD, DESIGNED FROM SCRAP, TO FILL OUR LUNGS WITH FRESH AIR.”

The photo of Licypriya wearing this invention on her back, a scowl on her face, is seen around the world. It's mask and a respirator connected to a plant in a vase, enclosed in a transparent box: a sort of personal clean air system, called SUKIFU (Survival Kit for the Future).

“It's a daring, abstract version of an oxygen tank,” she explains. “The plant symbolizes our environment, dying because of human beings.”

Licypriya is the planet's youngest activist, winning the World Children Peace Prize” in 2019 at the age of just 8.

From India, her campaign to save the Earth reaches the United Nations, when she's welcomed by Secretary António Guterres, to whom she presents “a memorandum on behalf of the children of the world.”

Licypriya is upset by the blame game being played by governments while the air we breathe, full of smog, is suffocating our lungs. She protests for two years, every Friday, the police even threatening her with arrest. But her dad is always by her side.

*“I carry a plant in a box, I connect it with a tube to a mask, and I breathe clean air. If children take these wearable plants around with them, they will highlight our concern and their protest will draw attention to pollution.”*

As the object of her denunciation she chooses Chandigarh, because the city, capital of the states of Punjab and Haryana, is held to be the cause of the deterioration in air quality in much of the country. Her project is supported by Professor Chandan Ghosh. Its mission: to issue a statement on the “vulnerability of the human race.”

Born in Bashikhong, in the state of Manipur, in 2011, she’s the oldest of three siblings. Like the other Indian #greengirl, Ridhima Pandey (profile on p. 144), in June 2019 she begins her protest in Delhi and addresses President Modi: “You must pass a climate change law. Now.”

Young Licypriya takes her first steps at the United Nations Disaster Risk Reduction conference in Mongolia, an event that changes her life.

With the association Child Movement, she tries to raise governments’ and the public opinion’s awareness about the subject of global warming.

In September 2019, she is invited to Africa by UNESCO, the African Union and the government of Angola to lead the climate strike in the capital Luanda: 50,000 Angolan youths take to the streets with her.

She participates in the UNESCO 2019 partners forum to denounce climate change, alongside the heads of state of Angola, Mali, Malawi, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, as well as 2019 Nobel Peace Prize winner Denis Mukwege.

The fresh, young face of this girl angry with adults wins over the audience for her speech at the COP25 in Madrid:

“Why do I have to be here? Why can’t I go to school, read books, or play? Because adults are ruining our future,” she declares. “I have come here to tell the world’s leaders that this is the time to act, it is a true climate emergency.”

And she appeals for the calling of a special session of the United Nations Security Council to fight the climate crisis in India.

With Greta Thunberg and Jamie Margolin (profile on p. 72), she is chosen by the United Nations as a “Climate Ambassador.” In front of the cameras, she asks that climate change education be made mandatory in schools.

“The Indian state of Gujarat is the second to include climate change as a mandatory subject in school education.” The first was Rajasthan. But too few people in the world recognize the climate emergency for what it is.

Then she explains why India has the world’s highest mortality rate for chronic respiratory diseases and asthma. “In Delhi, the poor air quality irreversibly damages the lungs of 2,200,000 people, 50% of them children.”

In 2020 Licypriya, with activists Greta Thunberg, Luisa Neubauer, Isabelle Axelsson and Loukina Tille, publishes a letter to the participants at the World Economic Forum in Davos, asking companies, banks and governments to stop subsidizing fossil fuels.

“Dear media, stop calling me the ‘Indian Greta.’ Yes, she is a great source of inspiration and a great influencer. We have a common goal, but I have my own identity. I began in July 2018, even before Greta did.”

In the last two years, she has brought her message to 32 countries. She is the youngest-ever speaker at the UN and, on February 18, 2020, is one of the guests at TEDxSBSC at the University of Delhi. The Earth Day Network names her one of the “rising stars” of environmental activism.

“Did you know that 31 million houses in India still don’t have access to electricity, even though the government has said that all villages were electrified as of 2018?” the girl denounces. “If India moved toward a green economy, it could create 3 million new jobs by 2030.”

Licypriya is also the first to have designed a solar-powered bamboo lamp, an all-Indian invention that helps children read and respects the environment.

The Coronavirus hits India incredibly hard. On January 23, 2021, Licypriya gets tested for the first time, caught on film by her sister’s cellphone. She’s headed to Mumbai for the new year’s green campaign.

At just 10 years of age, Forbes chooses her as one of India’s most influential young people.

Licypriya continues her fight, offering her support to India’s farmers, crippled by the pandemic and by new laws that take work away from them in favor of multinational corporations. Between late 2020 and early 2021 thousands of farmers take to the streets in protest; many are injured or arrested, and the Green Girls use social media to broadcast the farmer’s struggle and communicate their solidarity.

It's a battle that begins with gratitude for the people who “grow and take care of our food.” The campaign is a huge success, achieving a record number of “shared” posts and drawing the participation of figures such as Rihanna and Greta Thunberg.

On the 8<sup>th</sup> of March 2021 Licipriya received the International Women's Day Award from the Delhi Commission for Women for her battle against pollution and climate change.

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