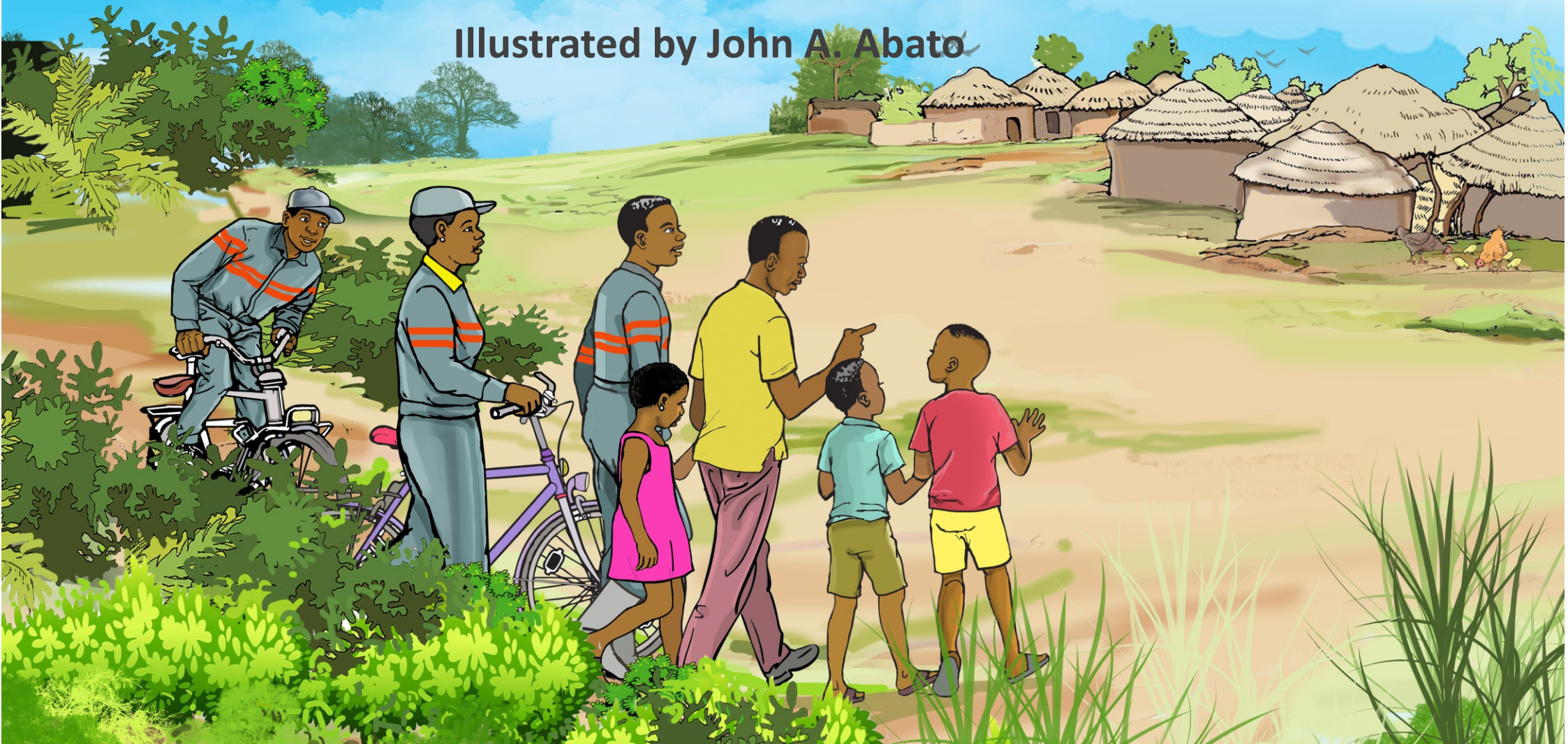


The Greatest Hunter of the Village

Eveline van Dienst

Illustrated by John A. Abato



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Foreword

“The story this book carries is as vivid as my childhood. Growing up, fires were always around us and they still continue to be around us. We were excited to see the fires come during the fire festival. The fire brought us bush meat, but what else did it bring? Nothing good. That is why it is time we take action to tame the fires and make our communities green and flourish once again with all the wildlife that we used to see. As Minister for Lands and Natural Resources, I am committed to working with each one of you little champions to build green and lively climate resilient communities for now and tomorrow.”

Hon.....

Nice to Meet You

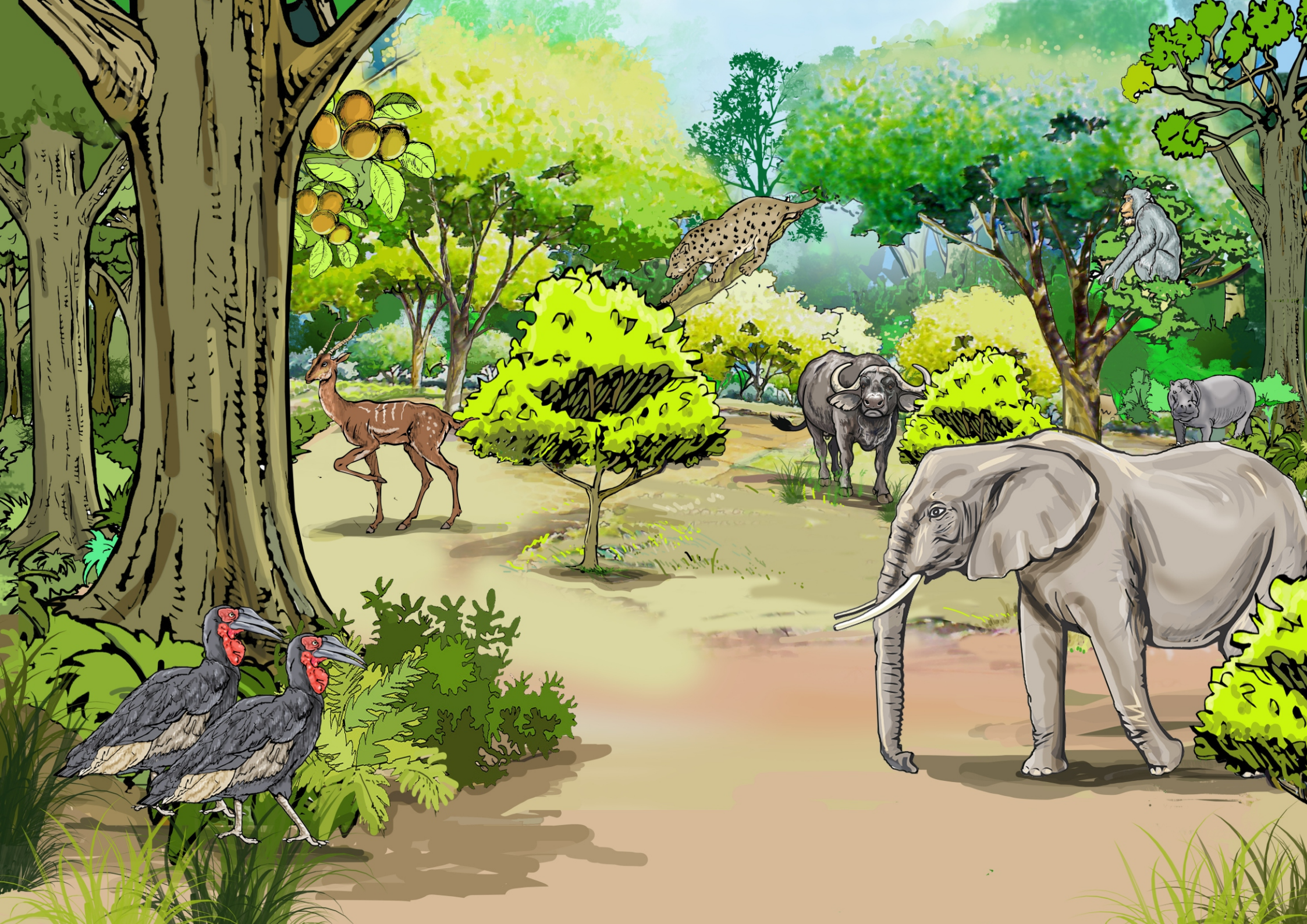
This is Jakpa. Jakpa is an eight year old boy. He lives with his two younger sisters, two older brothers, a mother, a father and... a dog. They all live together in a compound in a village near the 'new forest'. Although, new... new... it is not really a 'new' forest; it is an 'old' forest which is being restored, it is being brought back to life! This 'new forest' is meant to be for now and for the future. Almost everyone in the village has helped to plant trees and other plants. Everyone is proud of the result.



Do you know what the 'new forest' is?

The forest is really big. A lot of animals live in it; small ones and big ones, beautiful ones and scary ones. Some to eat and some... BE CAREFUL because they might eat you! ROARRR! The forest has a lot of trees and plants which almost all have special gifts. They can be used to make medicines and other items for taking care of our bodies, such as soap. They can also carry fruits which can be sold or... can be eaten by the villagers themselves. Jakpa likes the shea fruit the most; that one is soft and very sweet.

Do you know more functions of a forest?



Jakpa wants to become a forest ranger when he is older. That way he can be in the forest every day. Nature makes him happy; it is quiet and peaceful. Jakpa loves to play in the forest, sometimes he plays alone but most of the time he plays with his brothers. Almost always his youngest sister stays at home with their mother. She stays in their compound or visits some friends or family in the village with their mother. Their dog follows Jakpa everywhere he goes.

Do you like to play with different parts of nature?

This morning Jakpa and his brother Kipo are planning to go to the forest. They want to build huts. A big one in the trees and a small one on the ground. But... they are not allowed to go everywhere they want because the forest is easily damaged; there are still a lot of young trees and plants which can break very easily and that is not the intention; the young trees and plants need to grow tall and strong. Just like Jakpa when he grows older. Jakpa and Kipo know exactly where they may go.

Have you ever built a hut?



Chapter 2

Let's Go!

Jakpa finishes his breakfast and runs out of their compound. He yells at his brother Kipo 'Catch me if you can!' and Kipo comes right after him. Kipo almost got him but then... The dog pushes him from the side and Kipo falls on the ground. BAM! Right on his bum. Jakpa escapes and laughs hard, yelling to his brother 'do you call yourself a hunter?!' 'Wait and see! When I grow up, I will be **THE greatest hunter of our village!**'

Do you know how you will become the greatest hunter of the village?

Kipo says 'I know exactly how to catch animals. You catch animals with fire! Because with fire you can push animals to come out of their hiding.' 'You cannot always use fire when you are hunting.' Jakpa says. 'Sure you can.' Kipo says. 'No you cannot. Because when it is too dry or when there is too much wind the fire can get out of control and become very large. Then you will not only push the animals out, but you will also burn more than you planned to.'

Can you think of more examples where it is better not to start a fire?



Kipo says 'I have made a lot of fires in my life and I have never experienced that the fire did not do what I wanted.' 'Then you have been lucky all that time.' Jakpa says. 'Before you know it, you will lose control of the fire and it will take control. The fire can destroy everything on its way to... to... to everywhere. It can even destroy our new forest.' 'No it cannot.' Kipo says. 'Sure it can. The Community Fire Volunteers have already put out a lot of fires in and around our village. I am glad that they exist.'

Do you think it would be nice to participate as a Community Fire Volunteer when you are older?

Kipo goes back inside their compound. Jakpa is wondering what his brother is going to do. Kipo comes out of their compound again and raises his hand and says 'This is how we do it!' He holds a box of matches in his hand and says 'Let's go!' Together Kipo and Jakpa walk away from their compound. 'What is your plan? What do you want to do?' Jakpa asks his brother. 'We are going to make a fire!' Kipo says and raises his head proudly.

Do you know how to make a fire?



Chapter 3

The Fire

Jakpa looks at his brother and asks him 'But why? We do not need to hunt or cook. What is the reason that you are going to make a fire?' 'Well, just because we can. That is the only reason.' Kipo answers. They are walking further away from their village. The dog is wiggling right after them. Kipo stops. This seems to him like a nice place. Not too close from the village and yet not too far away. Kipo collects some sticks from the surrounding and puts them on the ground.

What are fires used for?

Kipo arranges the sticks and Jakpa is watching him. Kipo tries to set fire to the sticks with help of some matches. It is not going very well; the wind is too strong. The wind blows out the burning matches. Kipo keeps on trying and trying. And then... finally! Kipo has set fire to the sticks. 'Here you see! This is how I do it! This is how I will become the greatest hunter of our village!' He says proudly. The fire is growing. Slowly. Bigger and bigger. The wind is feeding it.

Why are fires dangerous?



Jakpa yells 'Stop! Stop! Put out the fire!' But Kipo is not worried about the fire. Because he thinks he knows exactly how to control the fire. Their sister Jafo has followed them and puts some extra sticks in the fire. 'What a great fire you have!' Jafo says. The fire grows. There is a breeze! The wind does not blow out the burning sticks. No; it makes the fire stronger! It grows higher and higher, wider and wider. The fire already burns the dry bushes and the young plants in the area.

Do you know how to put out fire?

Kipo tries to put out the fire with a wooden stick but... it burns. Kipo starts to panic. He tries and tries to put out the fire but he only makes it bigger. He does not know what to do. 'Help! Help!' He screams and Jakpa and Jafo scream with him. Jafo says 'I am going back to the village to ask for help from the Community Fire Volunteers; we cannot put out the fire by ourselves. If we do not stop the fire on time, it will find its way to the forest. And it will destroy everything on its way until nothing is left!'

Do you know how to get help for putting out fires?



Chapter 4

Help is on its way

Jafo runs as fast as she can back to the village. Japka and Kipo are trying everything they can to control the fire. It is a long while before help arrives. The fire keeps on growing and growing. Japka and Kipo are very afraid now. Kipo has never experienced this before. He had always been able to control the fires that he made. In the distance they hear voices. A lot of voices. Finally! At last! The Community Fire Volunteers arrive! Jafo has done great work asking them for help.

Do you have Community Fire Volunteers in your village?

The chairman of the community fire volunteers looks at Kipo and says 'You have been lucky. This fire could have become huge. It could have destroyed the whole area; the bushes with animals in it, the bushes of which animals eat, the forest, our farms and crops and even worse; our entire village! We could all have lost our compounds because of your carelessness. Do you understand?' Kipo looks at the chairman and then he looks at the ground. He says 'Yes sir. I understand. I am very sorry.'

Did you ever do anything careless like Kipo?



Kipo feels a hand on his shoulder. He is startled. He looks at it and then he looks up; he sees his father. 'What did you do my son?' His father asks him. 'I wanted to show Jakpa that I can make fire.' Kipo answers. 'But why?' His father asks him. 'Because I wanted to show Jakpa that I can be the greatest hunter of our village.' Kipo answers. 'Listen, my son: to become the greatest hunter, you do not always need to make fire. You need to think and be smart.' His father says.

Do you know another way to hunt animals?

'Just be smarter than the animals; that is the key. And besides; you do not hunt on your own. You always work together in a group. So there is not one greatest hunter, there are a lot of great hunters and they all have responsibilities for safe hunting. These great hunters need helpers. These helpers need support, like great children.' And Kipo's father winks at him. 'Okay, I understand. From now on I will become a great son to support the helpers AND the great hunters of our village.' Kipo smiles and winks back.

Are you a support and / or a helper?



Chapter 5

Back to the Village

The fire is put out. Everyone is happy. It was quite an event. Jakpa and Kipo do not want to go to the forest anymore today.

Maybe tomorrow. The forest will not walk away or burn away... not today, tomorrow or in the near future because everyone has learned a lesson:

- fire can be useful sometimes
- but fire is not a game (you should not play with it)
- use it wisely
- make sure it cannot spread
- put it out on time
- don't control a fire alone
- ask for help from the Community Fire Volunteers

And what did you learn today?



Additive:

On each page there are two questions. Watch and see how the children react to them and add some more questions yourself which fit their way of thinking at that moment. So each time you read the book, you can think of other questions: make it interactive and start a discussion.

For some questions all given answers are correct.

For some questions there are different answer possibilities, like:

Do you know more functions of a forest?

- more floral diversity (more different kind of plants) as a source of food, medicine, wood fuel to burn
- more faunal diversity (more different kinds of animals) as a source of food, pollination
- fluctuations in temperature are more extreme in areas with less forest, and it is hotter in villages that have no forest around
- water filtration is better, and that means clean water
- there are less floods and better erosion control
- the soil fertility is higher, and that is good for agriculture
- the oxygen production is better, and that means clean air
- it has cultural and / or spiritual functions
- forests are a place for playing, recreation, discovering new things

What are the purposes of a fire?

- to cook
- to hunt -> make prey move into open
- to prepare land for agriculture (get rid of weeds, etc.)
- by cattle owners to stimulate the growth of fresh grass
- for charcoal production, honey collection which can accidentally cause bushfires

Can you think of more examples where it is better not to start a fire?

- when it is very hot
- when it is windy
- when it is very dry

Some more tips and tricks on how to use fire safely:

- only on low wind days
- only when it hasn't been too hot
- know how to control small fires (e.g. You can also use sand in the absence of water to extinguish small fires)
- ask local Community Fire Volunteers for help
- do not leave fire unattended (stay close)
- tell your neighbors you are burning, so they can protect their land
- create fire breaks and maintain them
- do it before or early in the dry season
- do controlled burning
- children should not play with fire



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