

Cidinha's story



Cidinha

Photo: Julio Etchart/Oxfam

My name's Cidinha and I'm seven years old. I live in a village called Ludovico, in Brazil - which is the biggest country in Latin America. We live in the north, near the Amazon River and the rainforest that grows around it. It's always hot here. For half the year it is dry and dusty. Then the rains begin in January and last for months.

I live with my mum and dad, my three brothers, Roseinilton, Osmar and Francisco, and my sisters Osailde and Rosanilde. I'm the youngest in the family. My mum wakes me up in my hammock at seven o'clock on days when I go to school. (Photo 7) I get washed and dressed and have breakfast with Osmar and Francisco. My favourite breakfast is cous cous with melted cheese.

Our house is on the road which runs through the village. The walls are made from earth and wood, with palm leaves on the roof. It only has small windows, which means that it stays cool even in the hottest weather. Neighbours often join our family to share a meal or sit and chat. (Photo 11)

One thing you'll notice in Ludovico is the palm trees all around. They're called babassu palms. In the village we make our living from them. We have set up our own factory and we make soap, using the oil from the palm nuts. I often help my mum break the nuts to get the oil. (Photo 9) With the money I can buy exercise books or pencils for school in the village shop.

I do lots of things to help out at home. I sweep the house and fetch water from the well. I wash clothes and feed the animals. (Photo 8) My best job is helping my mum break babassu nuts.

Every day I walk to school along the dusty road through the village with my friends. It only takes five minutes. I feel lucky going to school, especially when I learn a new word.

After school I play with my friends Maria and Sueli who live just across the street. We play elástico which is a skipping game. Sometimes we play football or go for a swim in the lake to cool down. This is a quiet village and children can play together outside safely. (Photo 10)

I've got many dreams for the future. I love dancing and want to be a famous singer and dancer. (Photo 12) Right now, I'd really like a doll. I imagine sitting in the cool shade by a well and playing with it. I also dream about the sea because I've never seen it.

Shakeel's story



Shakeel

Photo: Rajendra Shaw/Oxfam

My name's Shakeel and I'm seven years old. I live in a suburb of the city of Hyderabad in India. It's hot, dry and dusty here, but other areas of India are lush and green. I have always lived here, and my father was born here too.

I live with my mother and father, and brother and sister. At home we speak Urdu, which is one of many languages that are spoken in India. The main ones are Hindi and English.

I wake up at six o'clock in the morning, just as the sun comes up. My brother Shabeer sleeps in the same room. Mum and dad are already up. My mum fetches water from the tap in the street so that we can all wash, and my dad washes his auto-rickshaw. This is a taxi with three wheels.

We are Muslims and say our prayers every morning. Then it's time to eat. For breakfast I have salted parathas with tea. (Photo 20) I like lots of sugar in my tea. Mum helps me get ready for school. (Photo 19)

At seven o'clock off I go to school. My dad gives me a lift on his way to work. We see lots of monkeys on the way.

We have a blue and white uniform at school. There are about 40 children in my class and so it gets very noisy. I like Craft and History best. (Photo 21) I've got four special friends - Rahim, Moulana, Ahmed and Suleman. At break time we play football. It's so hot and dusty that some children prefer not to wear shoes. (Photo 22)

I walk home from school with my big sister and our friends. It takes us quite a while but on the way there's a very big tamarind tree. We stop and throw stones to break off the juicy fruit. When I get home I milk and feed the goats. (Photo 23) That's my special job. I like it because then I can drink the milk. I also help my mum get the evening meal ready by cutting vegetables. We eat dinner at about 7.30pm. I like dal, potatoes and tomato curry. We all eat together if Dad is back from work.

After supper I watch TV or listen while my sister reads a story. By nine o'clock I am in bed. I sleep with my favourite pillow, which I don't like anyone else to use. A cool fan keeps Shabeer and me comfortable until morning. (Photo 24)

Sasha's story



Sasha

Photo: Sarah Errington/Oxfam

My name's Sasha. I'm eight years old and I live in Siberia, which is in Russia. Siberia covers a big area but not many people live here because it gets so cold in the winter. That's why I have to dress up so warmly. (Photo 13)

I live with my mum and stepfather, my brother Vanya and my sister Yulya. My grandmother, who I call Babushka, also lives with us. I've got two pets - Pushok (which means Fluffy) the cat, and Fil'ka the dog.

My stepfather is often away working and since I'm the oldest boy in the house I often help out. Every morning I'm up early. I help to look after Yulya and to dress her. (Photo 14)

I also share some of the jobs around the home. Every two days I go to collect water from the well. Vanya often helps me which makes it easier. (Photo 17) We borrow a sledge from our neighbour because the churns that we fill up with water are very heavy. Both of us have to pull together to bring the water back home. We take Fil'ka with us. In the winter I also clear snow from the path and bring in logs for the fire.

I walk to school - it's not very far. I often run so that I can get there ahead of the other children and surprise the teacher by being the first in the class. There are 14 children in my class. (Photo 16) I like reading stories and at break time we play chase and blind man's buff.

After school, I help get our main meal ready. We eat at about 3.30. I'm very good at cooking. I especially like making pancakes, which we eat with jam. (Photo 15)

Life in Siberia is very different in the summer and winter. In winter, my favourite game is making snow houses with Vanya. It takes almost a day to finish a house. I make the inside flat and

smooth and then make little tables, chairs and beds out of the snow. (Photo 18)

I love the summer here. I help out by going with my mum, stepfather and brother to collect camomile flowers in the fields. These are used to make tea and medicines. We work from the morning until about 3.30 in the afternoon. I really like the work. The camomile looks beautiful and there are butterflies and bees flying around. In summer I also like picking berries to eat and wild mushrooms which I find in between the fir trees.

Muluken's story



Muluken

Photo: Rhodri Jones/Oxfam

My name's Muluken and I'm seven years old. I live in a village called Gerba Sefer which is high in the mountains in Ethiopia. My house is made of earth and wood and there are trees all around. (Photo 1)

Near my house is a canyon. I go there with my sister or friends. We climb on the rocks and I can see for miles around. We watch the monkeys that live up there.

I live with my family all around me, in a group of houses called a compound. I live with my dad, my older sister Esketsenaf and my younger sister Mekdes. My grandmother also lives with us. (Photo 2) She's special because she does all the cooking and everything for us in the house. My mum works as a teacher in a school which is 20 kilometres away. It is difficult to travel so far every day, so she comes home at weekends and in the holidays. My uncle and his family live in the same compound. I see them every day. Sometimes my uncle lets me ride his mule. My cousin Zebawork is like another big sister. Another special person who lives near my house is the village elder. He is old and wise and kind to us children.

In my village it's easy to find someone to join in my games. (Photo 5) My favourite game is playing 'shop'. We also play a game called Segne maksegno. This means Monday and Tuesday and it is a sort of hopscotch.

I started school this year. After breakfast, I walk to school every day with my sister. It takes about 15 minutes. I go to school in the mornings from 7.30 to 12.30. In the afternoons a whole new group of children come to school. That's because the classrooms would be too small to hold all of us children together. Many children don't come to school all the time. That's because most families here are farmers. When it is time to plough the land or harvest, lots of children are needed to help out at home.

There's no running water in my house so one of my jobs is to fetch clean water from a pump and carry it back home. We always have to wash our hands before we eat (Photo 4) . There's no electricity so we use paraffin lamps at night and cook over a wood fire. Another of my jobs is to collect firewood. Before I go to bed I like to draw. When my mum is home, I cuddle up with her to sleep, while she has a cup of tea. (Photo 6)