

Life stories of the three finalists for the International Children's Peace Prize 2017

Mohamad Short

Mohamad, 16 years old, grew up in Syria, but fled for Lebanon when life became too dangerous at home. Like thousands of other refugee children in the country, he couldn't go to school, so he set out to make a difference for children in the same situation. Despite of the difficult circumstances he was living in, Mohamad built a school in a refugee camp. At the age of 12 already, he was teaching math and photography. Now 200 children access here their right to an education. Mohamad helps children to heal, learn and have fun with games and photography. He is a natural storyteller, raising awareness about the challenges refugee children face by bringing their stories to a wider audience.

Mohamad Long

Mohamad, 16 years old, grew up in Syria, but fled for Lebanon when life became too dangerous at home. In Syria, the war has produced almost 2.5 million refugee children, about 500,000 of them in Lebanon. Many live in poverty, without access to nutritious food and health care, or safe homes to live in. Almost half of children aged 6 to 14 can't go to school, and a staggering 84% of those aged 15 to 17 are out of school.

His parents couldn't find work in Lebanon, so Mohamad's father, fleeing by boat via Greece, sought asylum in Sweden. Back in Lebanon, Mohamad, his sister and mother struggled with poverty and for his first two years in Lebanon, Mohamad couldn't go to school. It was a struggle, but rather than defeat him, it fueled his will to fight for a better future, for himself and for his peers. Together with his family, Mohamad built a school in a refugee camp. He built it with his own hands and at the age of 12, he was teaching math and photography. When the government decided to remove the refugee camp, the school was destroyed. But it was rebuilt professionally, and staffed with formal teachers. It now teaches 200 children, who after completing two years can move on to the formal Lebanese school system.

Mohamad draws on his biggest passions, photography and filmmaking, to tell the diverse stories of his fellow refugee children in all their diversity. He teaches photography, and encourages children to take photos of their daily lives. Drawing on his earlier training and on his own experiences, Mohamad encourages them to express themselves and to process their trauma. He helps them to make new friends, to adjust to their new situation and to lead lives as normal as possible.

"The future is unclear and uncontrollable, so I stopped worrying about that. I want to focus on what I can do now."

Mohamad was nominated by the Syrian League For Citizenship

Faye Short

Faye is a 15 year old Indonesian girl. Ever since she was a child, Faye had been taught to give back. In Indonesia, trafficking and sexual exploitation of girls is a big problem. Especially undocumented women and girls are more vulnerable to trafficking. Every year, an estimated 100,000 girls in Indonesia fall victim to trafficking. To help young girls in Indonesia, Faye co-founded Faye's House. Here, girls are rescued and rehabilitated. To date, this organization has helped to rescue roughly 20 girls who have been trafficked and exploited. To prevent more young girls from being exploited, Faye visits high-risk areas to teach girls about their rights.

Faye Long

Faye is a 15 year old Indonesian girl. Ever since she was a child, Faye had been taught to give back. When she learned about child prostitution, Faye decided to dedicate her life to helping these kids. And so, when she was just 9 years old, she created *Rumah Faye*, or Faye's House, together with her mother. The organization focuses on prevention, rescuing and rehabilitation of victims. Faye is proactive in reaching out to kids who live in high risk areas; she educates them on the risks of trafficking and encourages them to pursue their education. She feels that she, as a young Indonesian girl, can relate to the girls and talk to them as their peer. Faye believes that everyone can make a difference if they want to. This led to the creation of Faye's Youth Team; a dedicated group of young people who together with Faye help to prevent children from being trafficked in Indonesia.

Faye also spearheaded the movement to help acquire birth certificates for children and families who were not able to obtain documentation on their own. One of the main reason why these girls are easily trafficked is due to the fact that they lack birth certificates. Faye works tirelessly on raising awareness on child trafficking and sexual exploitation and advocates for prevention efforts.

To date Faye's organization has helped to rescue roughly 20 girls who have been trafficked and exploited. Her family helps her financially and the organization is growing fast, with around eight full-time staff and 100 volunteers.

"Why do people always say being young is a weakness? Quite the opposite, being a kid is my super power."

Faye was nominated by Rumah Faye

Tymon Short

Tymon, 16 years old, lives in Poland. Tymon discovered that children in Poland had limited access to the legal system, simply because they are minors. He thinks that being a child is not a good reason to be excluded and that all children should have access to public information, especially when it concerns themselves. Too many decisions about children are taken by adults and children are not heard. Tymon took action to make it easier for children to participate in formal processes and gain information to do so. Now, Polish minors can observe and represent themselves in court.

Tymon Long

Tymon, 16 years old, lives in Poland. When Tymon needed information on his ancestors to create his family tree, he discovered that children in Poland had limited access to the legal system, simply because they are minors. He was automatically denied the information he requested because of his age. Tymon thinks that being a child is not a good reason to be excluded and that all children should have access to public information. Children have the right to information by law, but in practice children lack access and face obstacles to participate in society. Too many decisions about children are taken by adults and children are not heard.

Tymon therefore took action to make it easier for children to participate in formal processes and gain information to do so. He achieved that children are no longer blocked from receiving information because they are underage. Also, Polish minors are now being heard and able to observe and represent themselves in court. His actions make it possible for children to fully exercise their right to participate in society.

Tymon's uses social media to get his message across in Poland. In normal words he tries to explain to his peers what he is doing and what the right to public information means for them. He also reaches out to other children for help and involves them in rolling out petitions to reach his goals. His actions didn't go unnoticed in the Polish government. He has become the youngest advisor of the Minister of Digital Affairs, on matters concerning youth.

"If we lived in a world where people listen to each other and are open to each other's needs, this world would be better and we could all achieve more. Let's do it!"

Tymon was nominated by the Polish Ombudsman for Children