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From the BBC World Service, find it wherever you get your BBC podcasts.

This is Andrew Peach in the studio in London.

And this is Orla Geeran currently in Kiev.

Orla, it's great to have you with us for the happy pod this week.

You're the BBC senior international correspondent, so often in war zones, reporting on harrowing stories. But this week, a really inspiring story.

Yes, we've been back to Yemen where there's been a civil war now for almost a decade.

And I caught up with an incredible young boy called Ahmed.

I first met him two and a half years ago when he was nine.

And he was teaching his fellow pupils in his school at just nine years old.

But he's now 11 and we had a chance to catch up and see how he's doing now and what changes there have been for him and also for the school.

It was lovely to hear you reunited and to hear some positive news as well from such a difficult part of the world.

We're going to talk more about that in a little while.

Also on the way, the app that's teaching hundreds of thousands of people in the Hall of Africa to read and write.

Now I can read and write.

For the future, I aspire to secure a more fulfilling position than my current job and use my skills and knowledge to succeed.

We'll meet happy pod listener Tori, who's a lieutenant in the US Navy.

The reason I had to do this interview today or tomorrow is because this weekend my mom is coming into town to watch my baby.

So my husband and I can go climb another mountain in the Olympics this week.

And there's an invitation to a Greek island.

We are expecting you.

We're waiting for you here anytime you want to visit.

Are you familiar with the film Mamma Mia?

Oh, yes.

The picture you paint sounds very much like the Greek island in that movie.

I have no idea whether it is.

We're better.

First back to my colleague Oleg Erinn.

Finding Ahmed was a complete surprise.

We had gone to Yemen and one of the stories we intended to do was about a bombed out school.

Now, when we arrived, Morning Assembly was taking place.

And there was a young boy who was leading the assembly with a very loud voice, barking out instructions to his fellow students.

And that was Ahmed.

And later on, my cameraman happened to look into one of the classrooms and saw Ahmed standing at the top of the class actually teaching, which we discovered he does quite regularly if the teachers don't turn up. He stands in and takes the class.

And it was only at that point that we realized that Ahmed was blind and he teaches the other students.

And I remember asking him at the time, did he have any difficulty keeping them in order?

And he said, absolutely not.

They do everything I tell them.

He loves teaching.

Amazing young man.

And how did you come to go back two years after you met Ahmed, to meet up with him again and to see what progress has been made?

Well, we always wanted to return, but getting into Yemen is very difficult for journalists.

You have to get an endless series of permissions.

And in fact, it took us two years to get permission to go back.

But Ahmed was always top of our list.

We have kept in touch with him in the meantime.

I should say that after our initial report was broadcast, we had a very strong reaction from listeners and viewers.

Ahmed really connected with them.

Now, as a result of that, the charity Islamic Relief set up a fundraising appeal for Ahmed and his family.

And another UK charity, Twins, they also became involved.

And over the past two years, they have managed to refurbish several classrooms.

They got in school supplies.

They got in desks.

And a Yemeni donor also became involved and constructed a complete new school block

with brand new classrooms.
And all of this really came about because of Ahmed.
He said he wanted walls.
He wanted glass in the windows.
So they weren't studying in the rain.
He wanted lights. He wanted blackboards.
So he gave us this long list.
And batteries on the list as well, didn't they?
He said batteries.
And the most important thing is that they work.
So batteries were on his list.
And most of the things on that list,
he now has.
Now, we should say this is a particular case
at a particular school.
The overall picture for Yemen is still very, very difficult.
And indeed the overall picture for education,
because one-fifth of the schools in the country
are not in operation.
But certainly for Ahmed on the school front,
things are looking much better.
But we should also say that he is still a child
growing up in the middle of a war.
People connected with Ahmed
in an extraordinary way.
I mean, he is a very charismatic, funny,
lively young boy,
very clever, full of ambition,
full of hopes, full of dreams.
And he has managed to keep
all of that great spirit.
And if anything, I would say that when we saw him this time,
he seemed even more positive than he was before.
He's an exceptional child.
He would be exceptional in any circumstances,
but certainly he's exceptional to find in tyres
where there are so many difficulties to overcome.
But he has emerged as this incredibly bright, positive boy,
and he has so many plans for his future,
so many things that he wants to do.
When we were sitting in the school
in the refurbished classroom at the new desks,
I was asking Ahmed about his plans for the future,
and he reeled off a long list of things that he wanted to be.

I want to be a teacher, and a pilot, and an engineer,
and a driver, or a doctor.
I want to be everything.
Do you think you'll be able to do all these things?
Yes, sure.
I will do everything,
and I will marry a beautiful girl from the city.
And honestly, it was such a classic Ahmed kind of comment
said with his usual cheeky grin.
So when you leave, you couldn't but take this child away
in your heart. He's impossible to forget.
And tell me a bit about, you know,
what I think is probably quite rare in your role,
which is to be reporting on something so positive
and inspiring. That's not normally what you do.
I think, Andrew, it's true to say
I wouldn't be accused of being the good news correspondent.
I mean, over the years, many of the areas that I've covered
and the stories that I've covered have involved
very protracted conflicts.
But every so often, you do come across somebody
who is so exceptional that they shine out.
And Ahmed is definitely that kind of child,
that kind of young man.
And I'm on a human level,
you can't but relate to somebody like that.
And I think it wasn't just us.
We had the pleasure and the privilege of meeting him in person.
But I think he had the same impact on people who saw the story.
Our senior international correspondent, Ola Garen,
you can see more about that story at bbc.com.
Now, to the app that's teaching hundreds of thousands of people
in the Hall of Africa to read and write.
Daris was developed by British Somali refugee
turned tech entrepreneur Ismail Ahmed.
Conflict, climate change and a lack of infrastructure
mean the region has one of the worst literacy rates in the world.
Sara Manetta has been finding out how that's changing.
As the Coltuprea echoes in the distance,
Houdan is finishing doing the dishes.
Wrapped in her maroon abaya,
the 23-year-old is working as a cleaner
in Somaliland's capital, Hargaysa.
Until recently, she believed this was the only job

she could ever aspire to do.
But now, in her lunch break,
she takes out her mobile phone
and starts doing something she never thought possible.
When I was a child, I couldn't afford to go to school.
Neither could my parents, and I grew up in the countryside.
A couple of months ago,
a colleague told her about an app, Daris,
that teaches people to read and write.
It was a game changer for her.
Now I can read and write.
For the future, I aspire to secure
a more fulfilling position than my current job
and use my skills and knowledge to succeed.
The UN agency UNICEF
estimates that about three adults in four
cannot read and write,
and one child in four is not in school.
And despite local and international efforts,
literacy rates have been improving slowly.
This is Ismail Ahmed.
He came to the UK as a refugee during the war in Somalia
and later became a successful tech entrepreneur.
During the pandemic, his charity developed Daris.
The app is free and works offline.
It used to take to go to classes to learn their own mother tongue.
And now we have thousands of users
who were able to become functionally literate
in their own mother tongue without going to a class.
This approach aims to solve an issue
that the local government and NGOs have long struggled with.
Because of international sanctions,
most banks cannot operate in Somaliland.
People use their phones and mobile banking apps to make payments,
so not being able to read can make everyday life difficult.
Mubarak knows this well.
As he leads his camels to pasture through the high grass,
the young camel herder keeps his eyes down on his phone.
When he was a kid, he could only go to school for two years.
As an adult, he found himself struggling doing business.
Sometimes I couldn't read my customers' names.
There was a big barrier there.
Now whenever he can,
he sits in the shade to take classes on his phone

while his camels are grazing among thick green shrubs.
I can now read a long story.
It has helped me to read my customers' names,
their payments and messages on the apps.
I can read news articles.
Like Mubarak,
over 350,000 people in the whole of Africa
are now learning to read and write thanks to this app.
We're off to the Greek island of Tilos now.
It's small. 745 people small.
As we heard earlier,
if you picture Mamma Mia, you won't go too far wrong.
Tilos is the world's first zero waste island.
There's no landfill site.
Everything is repaired, reused or recycled.
It means the island's delicate ecosystems are protected
and there are new job opportunities too.
I've been talking to the woman behind all this,
and Mamma Mia came out of Peru
with the help of Jenny Janopoulou,
who translated for us.
It was a suggestion that we had
from the owner of Polygreen instead of Polyperonopoulos.
He called her and he goes,
Hi Maria, how would you like not to have any garbage on your island?
It sounds like the kind of idea someone might have
after a few drinks.
That's what she thought as well.
Either somebody is joking with me or he's drunk.
How did it come to be to be taken seriously
and actually looked into?
She started explaining the way
that this could be done
to transform the island into a no-waste island.
So that's when she said, OK, we have something good here.
And it's a huge change in behaviour we're describing here.
It used to be nearly 90% of waste going to landfill,
and now it's literally no waste going to landfill.
So what's changed? How have you made it work?
It was easy, she said.
We thought we would have issues with the older people,
because they are used to some waste,
but actually they were the best students.
They learned the fastest.

They have also taken an award for their efforts.
And what happens to the rubbish now?
What do your residents now do with their rubbish
that they used to put in the bin and used to end up in landfill?
Each business, everybody has specific containers
that are for recycling,
and everything goes to the recycling plant.
They get separated, they get composted,
they get reused.
90% of recycling at this moment.
And the 10% doesn't go to be burned or thrown away.
It goes for reusing, composting and for energy.
Here, we don't work as we say you do.
We try to involve people in decisions.
We become one with them,
and we try to talk with them
and see how we can achieve things together.
And she says that is the secret to achieving anything.
She gathered the people, even the little kids,
the older people, everybody.
And we talked about it,
and we decided how we're going to start,
how we're going to progress, and how it's going to go.
And do you think other towns, cities, countries, other islands
could do this, maybe if Maria was in charge of them?
Oh yeah, I can bet you that.
If Maria was in charge, the world would be a better place
if you ask my opinion.
From the Greek island of Tilos, the mayor, Maria Kamalifari.
Now, last week on the Global News Podcast,
I asked you to get in touch with your little win,
the thing that's happened in your life or where you live,
that's made your week no matter how small.
Thank you for so many emails.
Hannah in Sydney, Australia got in touch
to say the barista at her local cafe gave her a free coffee.
Then the next day, she found a \$5 note on the floor,
so she got another one.
And Peter's Burg in Florida to thank her neighbors
for helping to keep her home dry and free from debris
during the recent hurricane.
I had someone watching over me at a time of pure panic,
says Carolee.
Tori is a lieutenant in the US Navy.

She listens to our podcast in Washington State
and told me about her little win.
I got to go out and do some big wall rock climbing
out in the Cascade Mountains.
And that's big for me because I have an infant.
She's now four and a half months old.
And I've been feeding her and raising her
for the last four and a half months.
It's been hard to get out with an infant.
My little brother and my sister-in-law were kind enough
to babysit her for 14 hours while we went out and hiked
and then climbed a big day.
So that was huge for us.
That sounds amazing.
And a lot of new parents listening will appreciate
just how hard that is to get everything together,
to get out of the house and to be able to do something fun
like that.
It is.
And we were determined that having kids wasn't going
to stop us from doing the things we loved,
but we understood that there were going to have to be
adjustments to how we went about doing that.
People will be interested to hear that you serve
in the US Navy, which may explain the kind of character
you are and why getting out and climbing some rocks
is important.
Yes.
And we're fortunate enough to be stationed in an area
where the outdoors are super accessible to us.
So we both have that kind of drive where we love to get out
and do things.
And it was really big for us to be able to do that.
I did have to bring my manual breast pump.
And I had to express milk while we were hiking.
And I'm not too shy about doing it in public.
I think it's just a very natural thing that mothers need to do.
So we got to the bottom of our climb.
It was about a three-hour hike in.
And about that time was time for me to express.
So I just had my little manual pump with me.
And while my husband was setting up the ropes and all the gear,
I was just sitting there expressing milk and making sure
that I could be able to provide for my baby a little bit later.

So it was a balance.

But we're willing to work a little harder to be able to keep doing the things we love.

Now, Tori, I'm worried about next week for you, because this week you've climbed the Cascade Mountains and you've had a brilliant time.

What have you got planned for next week?

Because you're not going to want to sit at home.

I just know it.

It's so funny.

This weekend, my mom is coming into town to watch my baby.

So my husband and I can go climb another mountain in the Olympics this week.

Wow.

To combine being a new mom with the activity and also the career as a lieutenant in the US Navy is incredible.

There must be more than one of you.

Oh, I love it.

Yeah.

I love my job so much.

And I also really love living where we do and having the opportunities that it presents.

So it's just, it fits with my personality,

I think, and my husband's.

That's Tori off to conquer the Olympic Mountains this weekend.

Jess got in touch from Perth in Western Australia.

Jess wanted to tell me about Odie,

who's an eight year old miniature Australian bulldog

who is the world record holder of fastest dog to count from one to 10.

It was actually a record created just for Odie.

He can do it in one minute, 38 seconds.

So some good things do come out of lockdown.

Odie was driving us nuts because he was barking at every single person who walked past our house.

So I decided that I needed to teach him how to be quiet.

So in order to teach him how to be quiet, you have to teach him how to speak.

And then it kind of just progressed from there.

I was bored during lockdown and thought, okay, let's see if this little guy can count.

Odie, you have to make a recording for BBC.

Okay.

Now, can you do three?

Good boy.
What's four?
Good boy.
About five.
No, not high five.
Never work with children or animals.
You say, I love you.
We wrote to Guinness during lockdown and said,
our dog can count.
Is this a thing?
And they very generously wrote a world record just for him.
It took a bit of back and forth.
And of course, it's not just one, two, three, four, five.
We had to randomize the numbers every time we made an attempt
with the consent of a vet to say he was all very, very spoiled
and well-loved and healthy and some timekeepers.
And yeah, we filmed it and thought,
we'll see how we go.
And we were very excited when the certificate arrived.
I don't know how excited Odie was.
He may have been more excited about all the attention.
Okay, Odie, come here.
Let's see if he'll cooperate.
Anybody?
Can you count for me?
Can you do three?
Count one, two, three.
Good boy.
Odie and Jess in Perth.
Now, we'd love to hear about your little win.
Email globalpodcast@bbc.co.uk
and tell me about the thing that's made your week.
Global podcast at bbc.co.uk.
Still to come.
When you sing a lullaby to your child,
you're getting all kinds of feedback, right?
From the way they're breathing, from their movement.
And that helps you in real time adjust what you're doing.
A new Arabic lullaby.
The attacker had very good knowledge of banking systems.
\$3.1 billion in stolen funds.
Money laundering operations.
A cybercriminal group.
These are smart guys.

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We're talking about the Patriot items taken from the Aboriginal and Nindiliakwa community on an island off the coast of Australia.

One of the highlights of the collection is a group of dolls made from shells that children would have played with.

Our reporter Beth Timmins went along to find out more.

That's the song of Jharnam and Malia, Ayyanke Darbar. Langwa.

Playing at the University of Manchester's museum.

It's about 14 clans and is sung by aunties from the Aboriginal and Nindiliakwa community, celebrating the return of 174 artefacts.

Across the world, requests for cultural heritage required during colonial periods are gaining momentum, and this collection, traded and bought by sociologist Professor Peter Worsley in the early 50s, will now be returned to its rightful owners in Groot Island, off the coast of Australia's Northern Territory.

One of whom, elder Danjibana Nolene Lalara, was tearful as she thanked those at the ceremony. I've got nothing much to say because I am emotional now. Thank you so much. From me, from my heart, from my people, I want to love people. Thank you.

The Worsley collection includes fishing spears, boomerangs and shell dolls, painted with totemic designs to represent Mamarika and Burra clans. I spoke to delegates from the Nindiliakwa community, Nolene and Macy Lalara, and Amethia Mamarika after the ceremony.

I'm so proud of my people. It's been a wonderful journey for me on the way to Manchester, and I hope you guys also from all around the world, I hope you're also happy about your artefacts that have been returned. And why is it important for you to have these shells and the other 174 objects? The artefacts are going back home, and we want to give the knowledge and skills to our future leaders. It's not only a shell, it's got meanings and stories about the doll shells, and it's very important to us.

On the table, there are some shells that are about as big as my finger. Some of them are wrapped in parts of fabric which have been hand-painted with ochre, some of them are smaller and they represent the children, and some of the shells look like they've been wrapped with string. They're beautiful colours and designs, and no one's being allowed to film or photograph what's on the table because of its importance in the ceremony today.

After a grueling four flights over three days, this part of an Nindiliakwa heritage will be back in Groot Island, where Amethia told me her grandmother had played with them half a century ago. All these things we bring them back home because it's got a dream time stories in it, our history, it's got everything on it, our toll terms, so we need these things, our ancestors, all in time to bring them back to our country, for our future, to keep on doing it, to make it a life.

Beth Timmons reporting. Lullabies are sung the world over to help children drift off to sleep. Now, a special one's been composed to help children in war zones across the Middle East. Written in Arabic and performed by the Syrian singer-songwriter Ghalia Chaker, frequencies of peace has just been given the backing of the UN Refugee Agency, the UNHCR. Dr. Daniel Boling is a neuroscientist at Stanford University who helped to create the lullaby.

Our perspective is to bring the composition into alignment with what we know about lullaby, from studies of lullaby around the world and from looking at common patterns across cultures. So when you do that, you notice certain things. The songs that are traditionally used to help facilitate sleep have characteristics such as simple repeating melodies, slow, even rhythms, smooth, soft attacks, limited high-frequency energy, things of that nature.

There are some things that make it special and there are things that kind of make it similar to other lullabies. So it was written and performed in Arabic. It was purpose-built for these children. But at the same time, it's not as if this lullaby would work and another lullaby would not. What's really important with a lullaby is that it conforms to these principles. When you sing a lullaby to your child, you're getting all kinds of feedback from the way they're breathing, from their movement, and that helps you in real time adjust what you're doing. Maybe you don't start the next verse or maybe you slow down extra. But without that kind of feedback, it's really extra important that very basic principles are maintained and stopped to communicate it. It's not as if the fate of these children is fully determined by their circumstances, but it certainly makes it more difficult for them. Sleep is kind of the bedrock of brain maintenance, so it's really important. Music can really play a role there. Lullaby is something that parents do anyways. So it's a really powerful thing. And as any of us know, who have been moved by music, the power is undeniable. There are few stimuli in the world like music that are capable of sending shivers down your spine and bringing you to tears. Music is certainly one of them.

Isn't that lovely? Frequencies of Peace by Galea Chaker.

And that's all from us for now. If you'd like to get involved, do send us your little win.

Global podcast at bbc.co.uk is our email address. The happy squad this week, studio manager Kenneth Jones, producer Anna Murphy and editor Karen Martin. I'm Andrew Peach. Thanks for listening. Back with a happy part next week.