



AMADOU & MATHIAS

AWAKENING TO DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION ^(III)



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As children, we dream of discovering new things, of visiting faraway places, of making new friends. Friends with whom we can do exciting things and share valuable experiences. Sharing means each of us brings something to the table. We learn more by helping each other than by hiding in separate corners.

You will see how, in this story, the young African Amadou and his European friend Mathias share a wonderful friendship. They learn that, together, they can resolve their problems: it's a win-win situation for both of them.

The European Union is a privileged part of the world, so it's normal that Europe help fight world poverty.

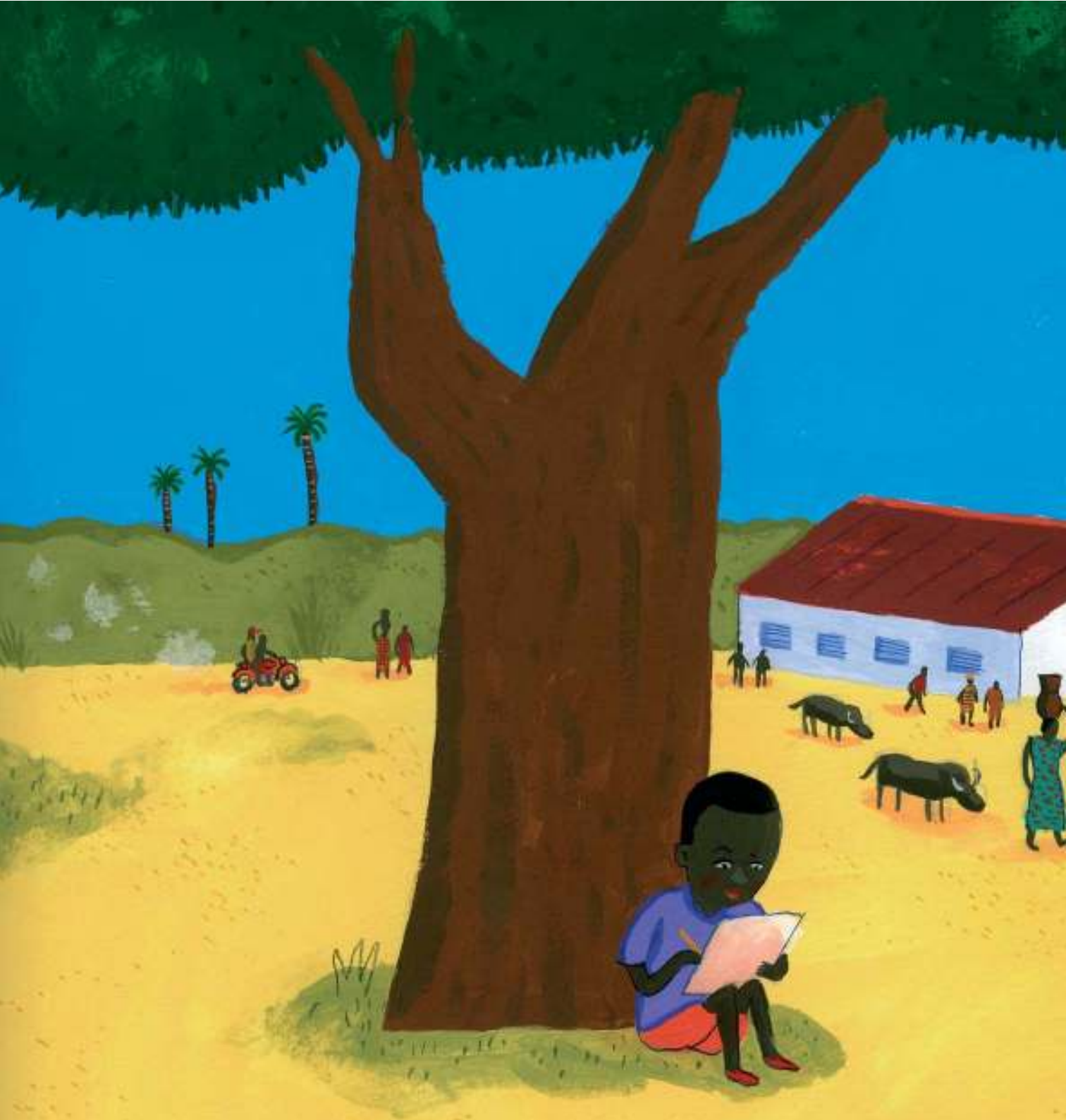
Perhaps you don't know this yet but you, too, can relive the story of Amadou and Mathias because, like them, you're a citizen of the world!



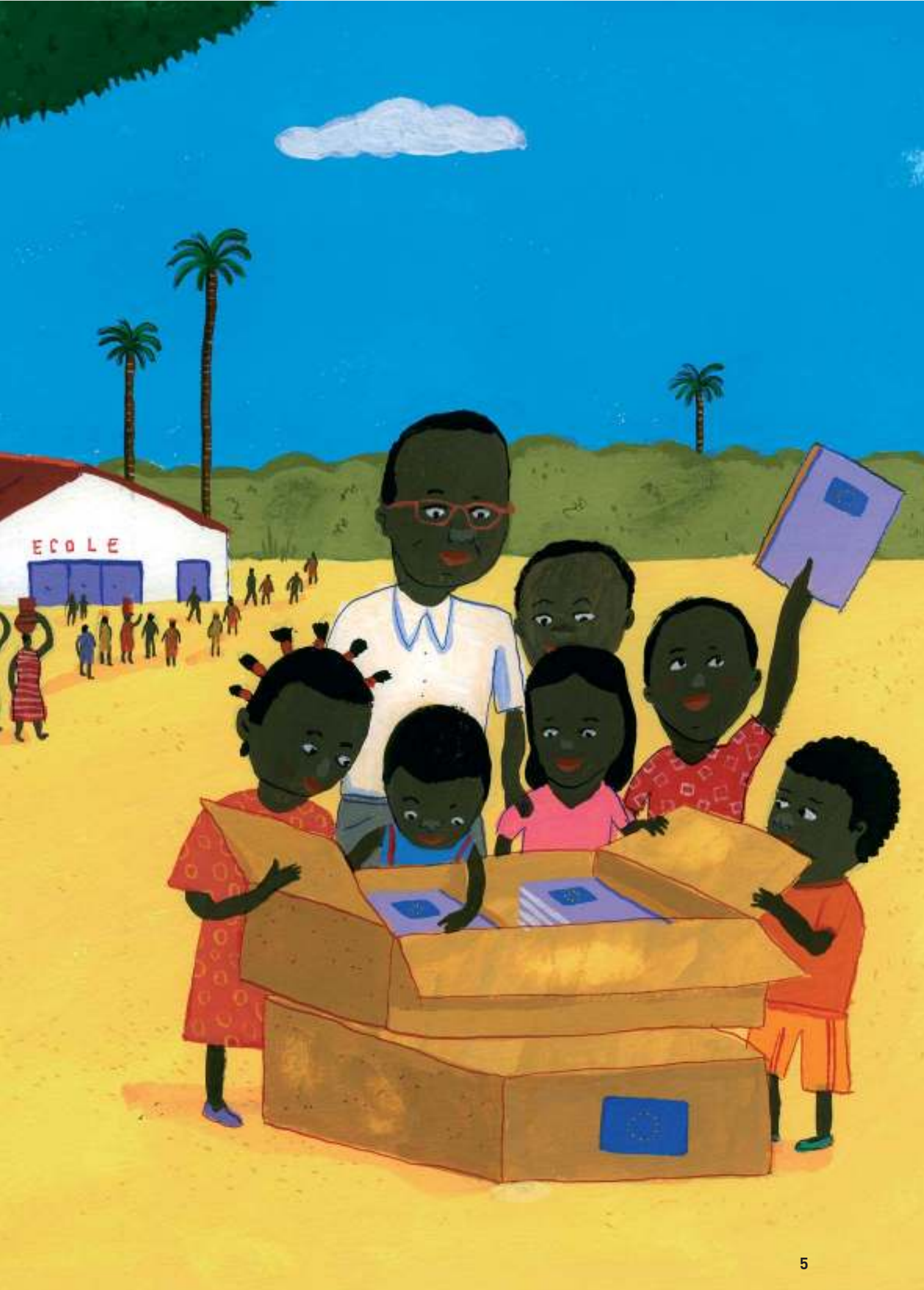
Louis Michel

European Commissioner,
in charge of Development
and Humanitarian Aid





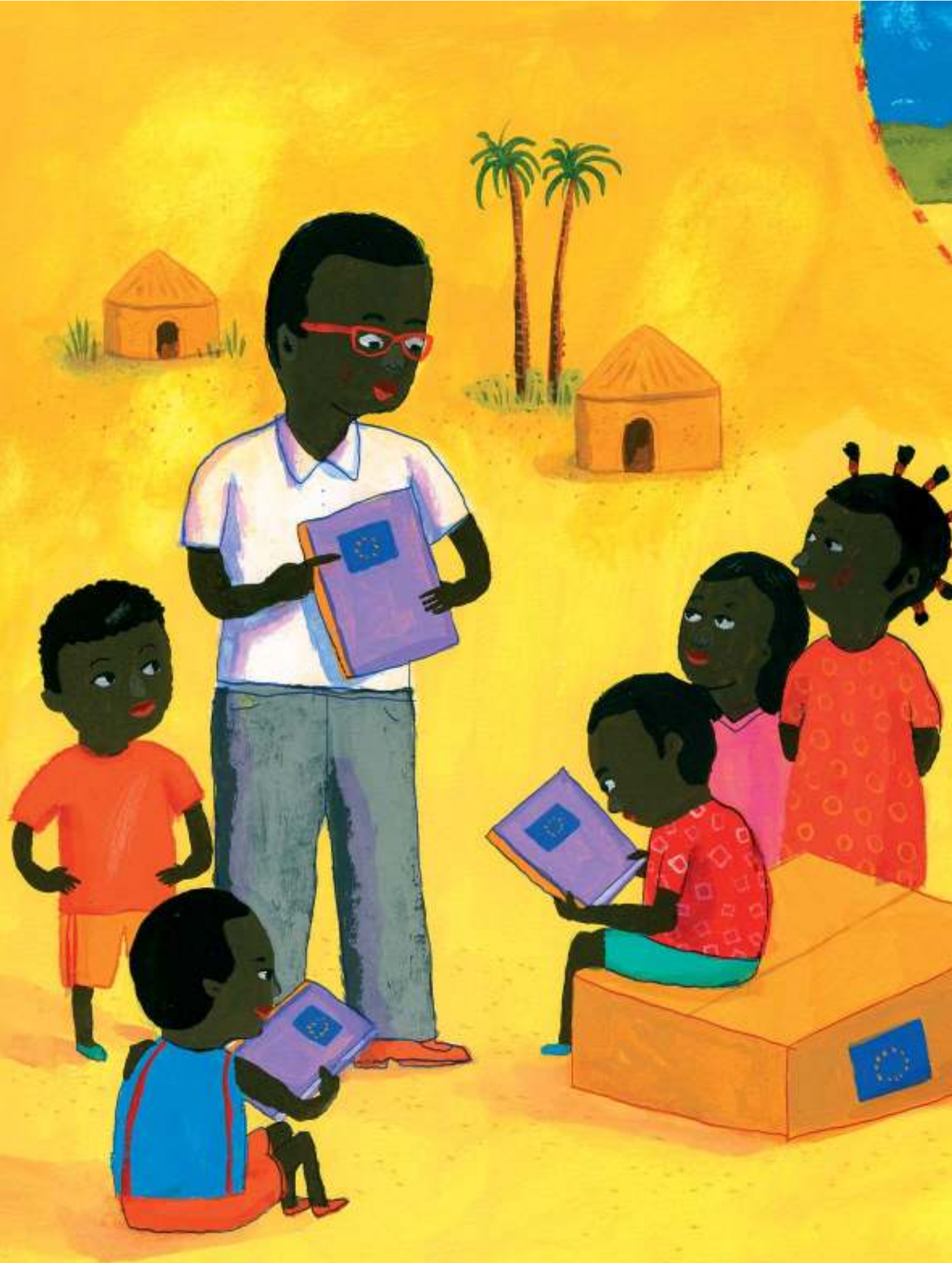
Amadou is sitting under the big mango tree at the back of his school. He's writing to his friend Mathias, who lives in Europe, and telling him that his class has got the exercise books, pencils and other school things that Mathias sent them. What a celebration when they opened their parcels!





Amadou and his colleagues have brought wood to make shelves, so that they can put their things in good order. The teacher then gives them some cloth, wire and bamboo leaves and they start making kites. The teacher tells them what to do. This will be their present to Mathias' school.







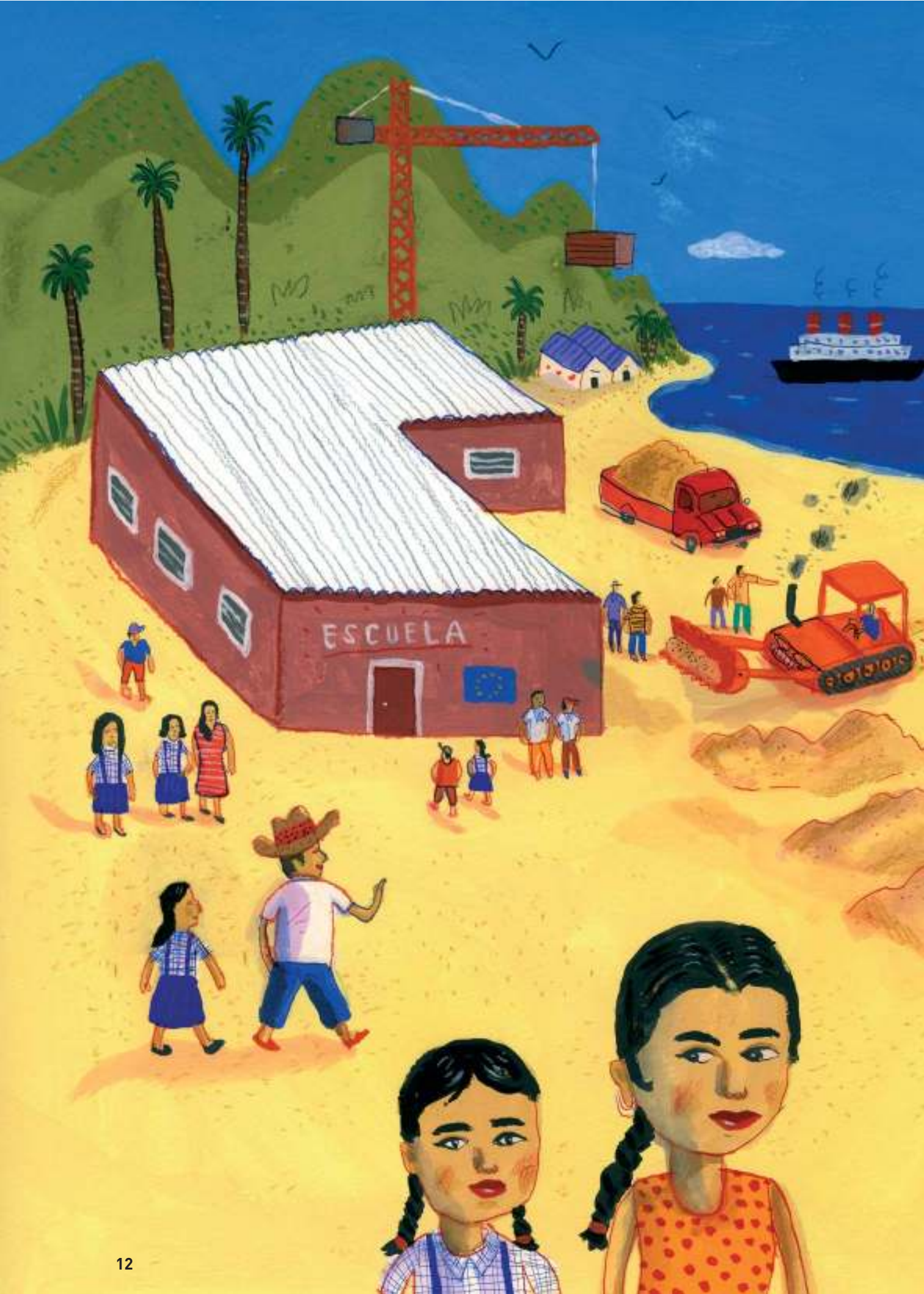
The teacher points to the blue flag with gold stars on the cover of the exercise books. "Do you recognise this flag?" he asks.

Amadou knows the answer. He has seen one like it at the entrance to the health centre where he sometimes goes with his grandmother Fatou.





One day a 'cyberbus' with the gold-starred flag actually came to their village. The doctor at the health centre used the opportunity to contact the 'telemedicine' service and discuss with his colleagues in town the best treatment for grandmother Fatou.

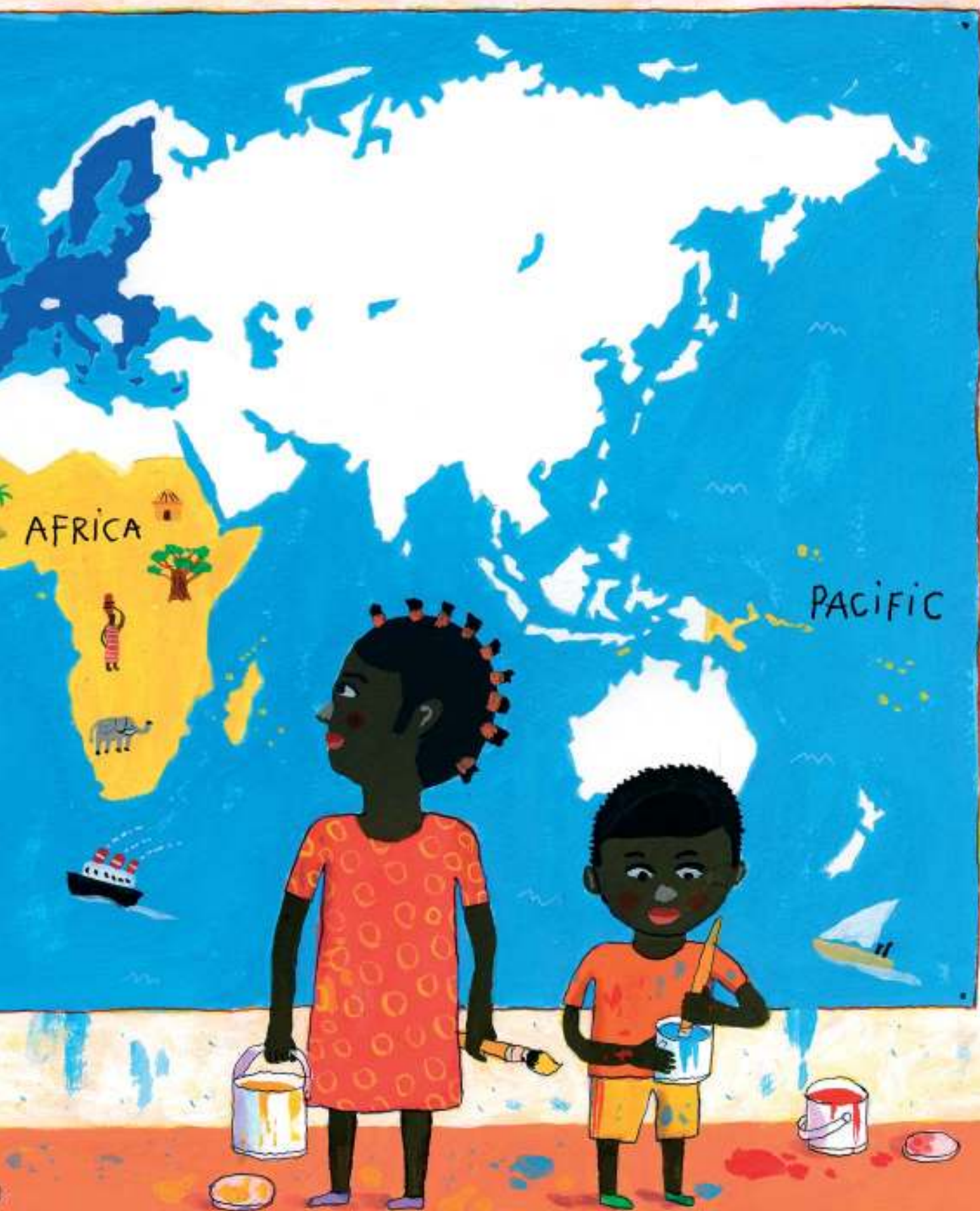




The flag is the colours of the European Union, the most important partner for Africa. Europe provides the money for a great number of projects in Africa and the countries of the Caribbean and the Pacific, to help build schools and roads, and fight diseases like malaria, tuberculosis and AIDS...



Altogether, the European Union and its 79 partners in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific (ACP) are 106 countries and 1.2 billion people. Only 15 kilometers separate Europe from the African continent at the Straits of Gibraltar.





There is also a blue sign with stars on a construction site close to the school. The site is going to be a football pitch. All the people of the village are there to help. Amadou is delighted. He writes to give Mathias the news. Football is a passion for both of them.







Amadou is already dreaming that he will be a world-class footballer! Africa has some great champions who started off with only a ragged ball, no smart shirts and no football boots. It wasn't easy. But they put all their heart into it, and they had good trainers. A lot of European teams win their championships thanks to their African players. .





At the same moment Mathias, who is in the playground of his school, doesn't feel like joining in. He's sad because he won't be able to take part in the kite contest tomorrow: his kite is broken. And he's ashamed when he thinks of Amadou, who would be teasing him gently. He misses his African friend. What should he do now?



All of a sudden, the wind gets up. The children stop playing and look up. There, on the horizon, a huge and colourful cloud slowly moves toward them. What on earth can it be?





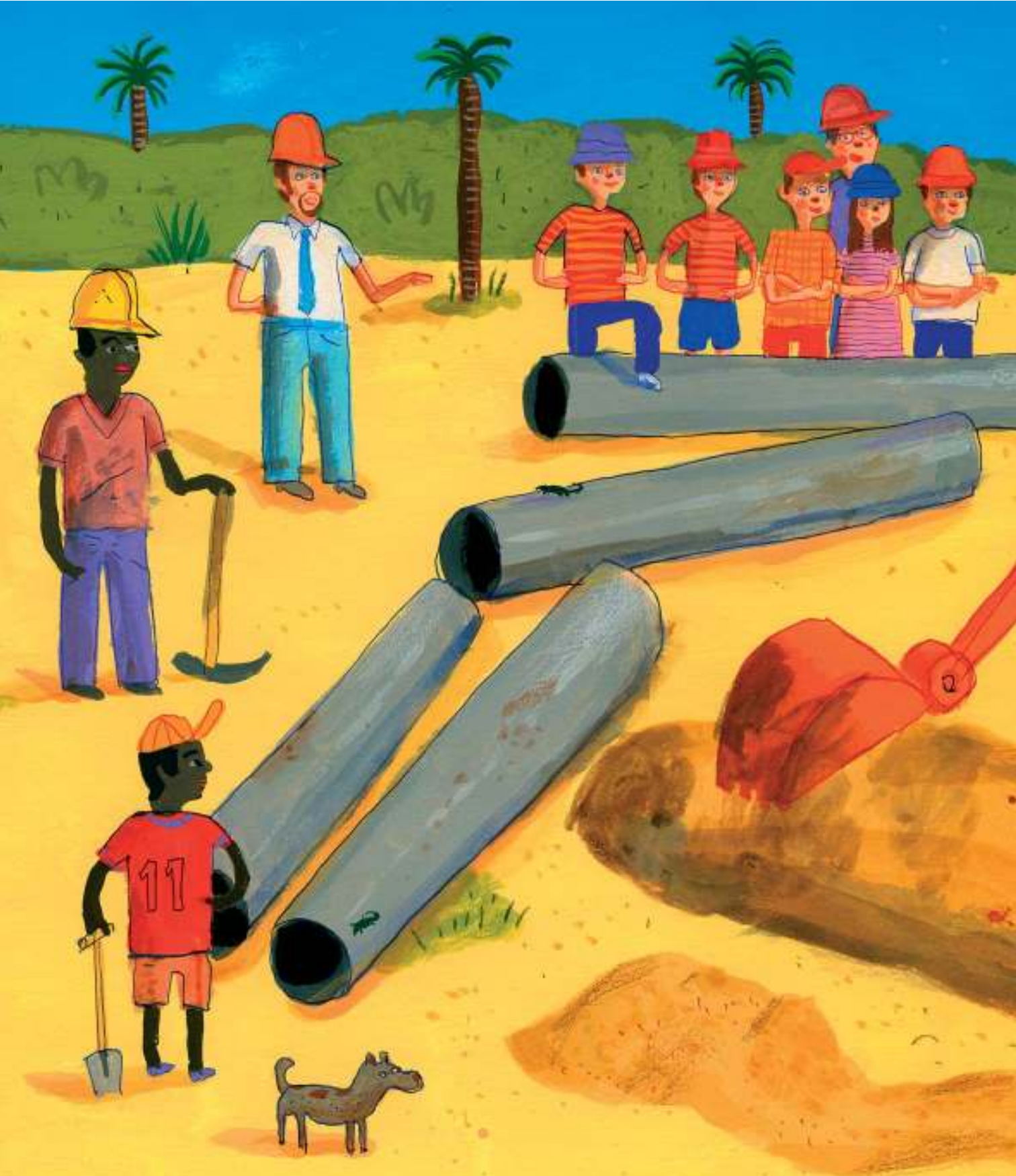


An army of lions, elephants and crocodiles dances in the air, then lands majestically in the playground. The children rush forward and Mathias jumps and catches a lion by the tail. There's a letter tied to it! A letter from Amadou!



Thanks to the kites sent them by Amadou, Mathias' class has won first prize in the contest. The teacher has an important piece of news for them. He's going to organise a visit to Amadou's village with the money won in the competition.





Mathias' and his class will be accompanying the engineers who are going to link Amadou's village to a drinking water network. Thanks to this link, the mothers will no longer have to walk for hours to get water. It's a project of the European Union.





“You’re going to learn a lot of things in Amadou’s village”, says the teacher. Mathias tells a story about his first visit. One day the head of the village asked him: “How long have you had that watch?” “A year”, replies Mathias proudly.

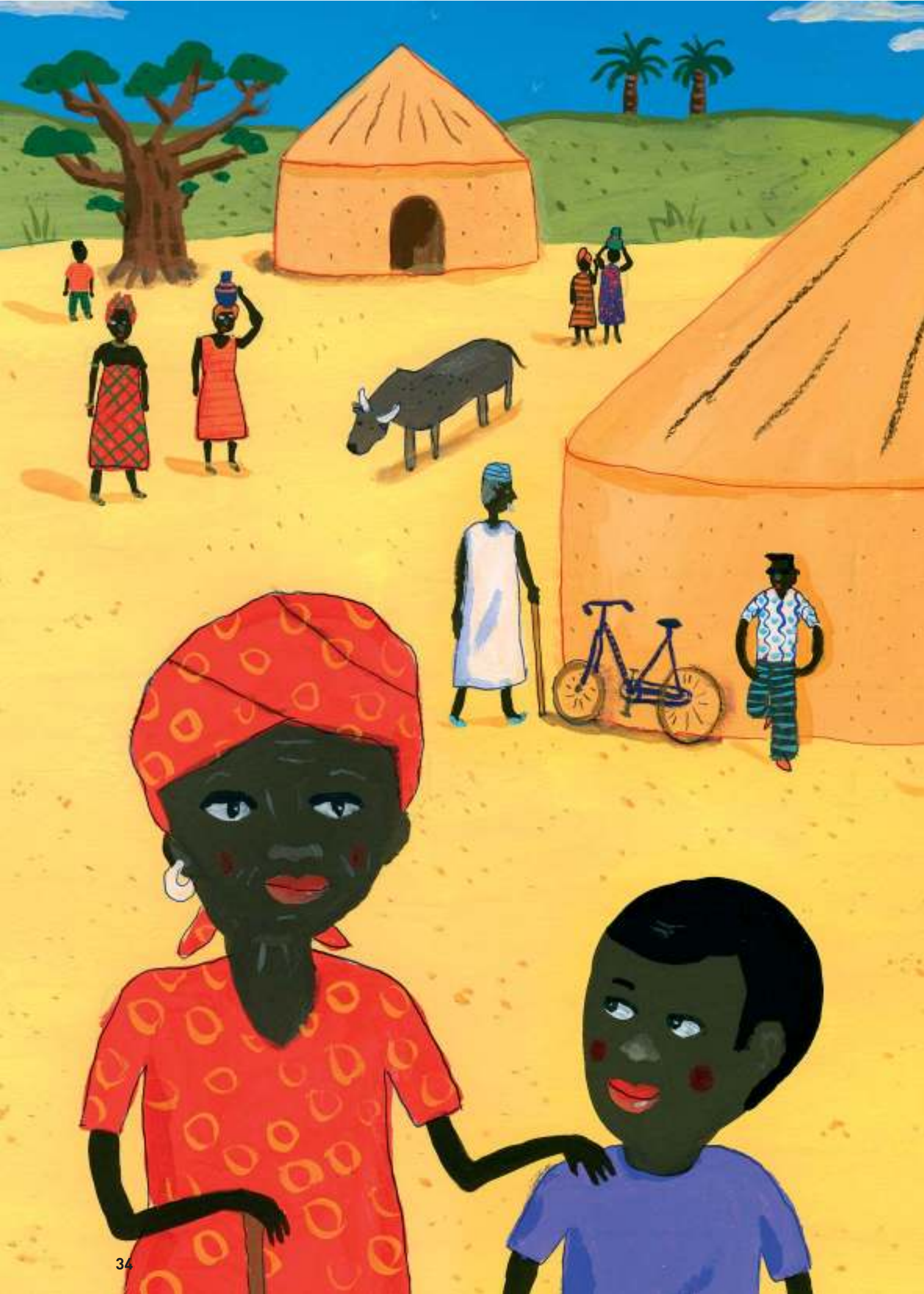




The headman then puts his hand over Mathias' wrist, covering the face of the watch, and asks him: "Are the hours written in Arabic or Roman numerals?" And, in the sand, he draws the two ways of writing '1', '5' and '10'. "Arabic", replies Mathias.



When the headman lifts his hand, Mathias sees that he was wrong. "You have eyes but you don't know how to use them", says the headman, laughing.





In the village, the excited children and parents get ready to welcome Mathias and his colleagues. Amadou's grandmother knows that she will soon have lots of new little ears to listen to her wonderful stories which have been told down the generations. Stories of friendships and people helping one another.

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