VISION

ESCWA, an innovative catalyst for a stable, just and flourishing Arab region.

MISSION

Committed to the 2030 Agenda, ESCWA’s passionate team produces innovative knowledge, fosters regional consensus and delivers transformational policy advice.

Together, we work for a sustainable future for all.

The characters and events portrayed in the stories are based on true stories from the Arab region. Shams, Izdihar, Ms. Demagh, Mr. Arkam, Salam and Adila are friends with different skills and abilities who represent ESCWA. Ward and her grandfather are from two different generations - they represent the continued past-to-future concept of sustainable development.
Meet ESCWA’s friends

Shams (Sun): Bright like the sun, she loves to see nature blossom and nothing hurts her more than seeing the environment suffer.

Ms. Demagh (Miss Brains): Her motto is: “Brains come first!” She wants to show everybody, young and old, the value of technology.

Adila (Justice): A tireless advocate for gender justice and equality, she hates injustice and biases.

Salam (Peace): Suitably named, he avoids conflict and uses wisdom to resolve disputes.

Mr. Arkam (Mr. Numbers): Living up to his name, he won’t believe a statement unless it’s backed up by data and statistics.

Izdihar (Prosperity): His mission in life is to make his and other communities flourish and thrive.
Story I

People and the environment: friends for life
The neighbourhood square...

You’re slow, Grandpa.

You’re cute!

Hurry up before someone takes over my patio.

Your ‘patio’, eh?! Very nice!

You just need a tea pot for serving your guests!
It’s too hot! It should be cold in winter, no?

It wasn’t like this in my day.

It’s global warming.

Global warming? Who’s warming the globe, Grandpa?

The Earth’s temperature is rising. We humans are to blame.

His cart is empty… no vegetables, no fruit. No apples, no oranges…

There wasn’t enough rain this year.

That’s Raji.

Rain is water.
Plants and humans can’t survive without water.

Without water Earth will become a desert.

Will our neighbourhood become a desert, Grandpa?

It’s beginning to look like one.

I’m afraid it’s getting warmer and Raji’s cart might stay empty.
Meanwhile, on the other side of the neighbourhood…

Vroooo oooom

This is awful!

I have to tell the others!
Here comes Shams! Our local star!

It’s hot, the traffic is at a stand-still – I’m suffocating!

What’s the problem now? I thought we’d fixed the traffic lights!!

A water tanker is blocking the road.

The honking is unbearable!

There’s black smoke everywhere and the heat is stifling!
Traffic jams make people angry, which could lead to trouble!

It’s so unfair! Some people have no access to running water and others are just wasting it!

If only they’d use it to irrigate trees!

If only they’d plant trees instead of all this concrete.

If only they’d learn from all the environmental crises around the world.

We need water to drink first. Then, we can worry about the trees.

We should come up with a strategy to stop all this water being wasted.

But trees are important. If we lose our trees, nature loses its lungs...
... we lose clean air... and global warming gets worse.

We should make a proper plan.

To make plans, we need data.
We need data about the local people and plant life.

Well, let’s each take on a role.

Great! Let’s go and talk to our community leader! Tell him our plan.

The ESCWA friends started working to the rhythms of their anthem.

We are ESCWA!

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We are ESCWA
We work with passion
We bring hope to the region

We desire life
For every boy
For every girl
Our youth
Are our wealth
And our concern

We build with determination
We enrich with knowledge
Let’s join forces
Let’s sow seeds
And reap the fruits

We are ESCWA
We work with passion
We bring hope to the region

No hunger,
No poverty
No war,
No oppression
Let’s join forces
Let’s dispel darkness
Proliferate peace
Maintain security
Deliver prosperity for our nations
Promote a dignified life for our peoples

We are ESCWA
We bring hope
We are ESCWA
We work with passion
We bring hope to the region
We are ESCWA
We work with passion
We bring hope to the region
We bring hope
We are ESCWA
Later on, at the community leader’s house...

Hello! Good to see you all! What can I do for you?

We’re working on a plan for improving water use and protecting the environment.

First, we need to collect data on the number of houses and residents in the community.

I’m happy to help. Let’s do whatever we can to make our community better!

Let’s invite the residents to a meeting.

The men AND the women!

Of course! Everyone with bad habits harms the environment.

Let’s start with an awareness campaign! We’ll call it:
“Change your habits, protect your environment”

Great! How do we launch it?

We’ll raise awareness using the neighbourhood’s website...

... and the websites of neighbouring communities and the Green Society, too.

We’ll tell them about technology! About taps that save water...

... and smart meters that calculate the cost of the water used.

Why not build stations that purify used water...

... which can be used to produce energy...

... and water plants and trees!
Speaking of energy, can we replace the streetlamps with solar powered lamps?

Did you know that we could save two thirds of the water we use if we upgrade the water grid?!

Saving water and energy should be a way of life!

Shams, what are you up to?

To start us off, I’m launching a little forestation campaign!

We water the soil, its lungs start healing, oh what a feeling! Do you like my environmental poem?
And the team rolled up their sleeves...

It's never easy for a community to change its habits.

But hopes are high. People are working together, striving to develop their community and protect its environment, bringing prosperity and improving everyone’s lives.
Once work is completed...

The air feels so fresh, Grandpa!

Yes. And the fruits are clean and look delicious!

What fruits?

The ones waiting for us on Raji’s cart.

Both laugh happily!
Story II

Learn and apply
Wait for me, Grandpa! My bag is heavy!

I thought books had been replaced with electronic screens.

Haha! They're called tablets, Grandpa.

You know I'm not great with technology!

You're from a generation of book readers, Grandpa.

What did you learn at school today?

Like what?

Every child's right to education.

The teacher talked to us about human rights!

Of course!
Every child should have a tablet, too, don’t you think?

In our neighbourhood? Is that realistic?

Do they use up-to-date technology at school?

I don’t know... but if the principal asked Ms. Demagh and her friends to help, I’m sure they would.

I really like these boys and girls. Aren’t they so clever?!
Ms. Demagh is the technology expert.

And Shams is the specialist in environmental issues.

You know all of them, Grandpa?

They’re from our neighbourhood and the neighbouring one... They’re passionate about the work they do.

There they are, heading to the school campus.
So, we’ll start by compiling data and then prepare studies and come up with strategies... to improve students’ study skills... and enhance teaching and learning at the school.

Access to education is essential... for everyone.

Only a few own computers.

We need to find solutions for students who are facing obstacles.

We won’t let poverty stand in the way of learning!

Let’s take this up with the principal. I’m looking forward to sharing our ideas with her!
Hello, principal! As you asked, we’ve come up with some ways to improve teaching strategies at school. We need to keep up with modern learning, but unfortunately, we haven’t got the equipment.

Students don’t have computers or tablets - or the money to buy them. Technology should be an integral part of the curriculum...

... it provides the students with access and opportunities.

We need a programme that supports everyone, rich and poor... and persons with disabilities. But first, how do we get more computers for the school?
We’ve got some ideas! Recycled hardware is a great option. My mission in life is to protect the environment and recycle everything, even computers!

A local community organization is upgrading its equipment. They’ll give us their old computers. They’re used, but they still work fine.

Shams is passionate about reducing electronic waste by reusing old computers instead of throwing them away.

How many more computers do we need?

Excellent!

Enough to make sure that all the students have access to modern education tools!

After that, let’s organize a competition for the students. They can create and build an innovative app.
We can run a workshop on how to improve internet connection... to support the students’ inventions and encourage their creativity...

... their ideas could really contribute to building a better future!

I’ll coordinate with the community leaders and prepare training courses for teachers.

Shams and I will work with the local community to get all the equipment we need.

Let’s get all the teachers together.

I’ll help in any way that I can!

Let’s get to work!
Computers were donated to the school...

... training courses were provided for all the teachers...

... and with the support of the ESCWA team, the school began upgrading its curriculum to equip its students with technological skills, as they are the key to the future.
What did you learn today, my little genius?

A lot! Look what you can do with a tablet!

You invented something?

No, but a classmate invented an app. The neighbourhood leaders liked it, so they offered him a summer job!!

Will you invent your own app one day?

Good idea! I can sell it and make money.

What will you do with the money?

Publish my first novel.
Lovely! And what's the title of your novel?

I don't know yet.
Story III

A matter of equality
What's all the fuss about, Grandpa?

Women should stay at home
No women presidents

Women should stay away from politics

Our neighbour Samia is going to run in the upcoming elections. People are objecting.

We want a man to represent us
What are elections?

They’re a democratic way for people to vote for who will represent them.

Democratic way? What do you mean, Grandpa?

Everyone’s vote is counted and the result reflects the opinion of the majority.

The majority wins and the minority loses?

Yes. The candidate with the most votes is elected.
What's wrong with Samia?

Nothing, sweetheart. The problem is discrimination between men and women.

What's discrimination?

It's when men and women are treated differently.

I can hear women shouting. Are women upset, too?

Yes. Some of them think that women should stay at home.

Even if a woman is top of her class and great at her job?

Would she be disappointed if I ever run for president?

Will you vote for Samia?

I'll vote for the best candidate, man or woman.

Well, ask your grandmother. She's upset about it, too!

Maybe if you prove that you're clever, she'll be the first person to vote for you!
People in my neighbourhood are angry because I’m running for president.

Only a few people, Samia. Don’t worry, we’re here to support you.

Let’s go. The team is waiting.

Women stay out of politics
Thank you for meeting me.

Ever since I announced my candidacy, all you can hear is “women should stay at home.”

The only thing they seem to care about is that I’m a woman.

If they see how competent you are, they might change their minds.

That’s not fair!
Exactly! If we could show them you’re right for the job, I’m sure they’d give you a chance. Then we can have a fair election.

But how can I make them listen? Let’s think!

First, let’s count the people who already support Samia, and count the people opposing her.

Do you mean that by meeting with her opponents, we can alleviate their concerns? Brilliant!

I’ll organize a meeting between you and the prominent local women.

Do you have a plan of action?

Of course! I have a project to help boost our community. The first priority is providing young people with jobs.

Great! We’ll promote the meeting on social media.

Great. Let’s go!

But first, we should talk to the community leader. We need his support.
Welcome back, team!

We came because you believe in justice and equality, and we know you’ll support us in our commitment to development.

We want to discuss our plan to support Samia and guarantee fair elections.

A lot of people here think that leadership is not for women!

But for elections to be fair, only the candidates’ qualifications should matter!

Adila is right! Our statistics show that Samia has supporters, so she has a right to run for office.

“Your Right”, a civil society organization, has agreed to back Samia and finance and support her action plan.

The groups will be representative of all the different voters, men and women.

We’ll help her organize meetings with community groups to discuss her goals.

We’ll make sure that the projects benefit the whole community.

We’ll train Samia in debating techniques that use facts and figures to make arguments.
We’ll create a website for the elections, so she can broadcast her plan of action. Everyone can read it and even comment on it.

You’ve already got my vote for launching your campaign online, instead of using brochures and flyers that aren’t environmentally friendly.

Could we conduct the elections completely online?

Hmmm. I’m not sure if the neighbourhood has the infrastructure.

That would ensure that future elections are transparent and open to everybody.

If you win, you can make sure that all elections take place online.

This will definitely win you my vote!

Thanks for your support, team!

Let’s get to work, and may the best candidate win!
Meetings are organized, discussions held, and Samia presents her plan of action. Some remain opposed, others vote for her.

The candidate with the most votes will win, as is fair!
Two weeks later…

What’s going on, Grandpa?

I heard that Samia won the elections.

Did she deserve to win?

Of course! She had the highest number of votes.

Some people are upset. Why?

Because they aren’t used to seeing women in decision-making positions.

Do you think they will get used to it, Grandpa?

It is also up to you…

… to you…

… to Raji…

… to your generation, sweetheart!

That’s up to Samia!
Story IV

When peace prevails, everybody wins
What’s happening, Grandpa?

Our team lost the football match.

But they’re so angry. Is that normal?

So, how should we compete?

Being competitive is normal, but being a bad loser isn’t healthy. It causes trouble!

In the true spirit of sport.

The true spirit of sport?

Look! Khalid and the others are arguing with players from the neighbouring community!

It means that when we lose, we should accept it gracefully.
You’re the referee! You shouldn’t take sides!

But he’s following the rules, Khalid.

What’s wrong, Khalid? They won because they scored more goals.

But the referee didn’t count the last goal we scored!

Of course I didn’t. You scored after the final whistle!

You lost, Khalid! Get over it!

You scored after the final whistle!

You lost, Khalid! Get over it!

We can’t lose on our own pitch!

It’s a competition! You win some, you lose some!
They made loads of mistakes!

Liar! We won this time, and we’re always going to win.

Yeah, sure. In your dreams! Next time we'll crush you.

Stop it!

What’s with all the yelling?

We’re out of here. Don’t you dare step foot in our neighbourhood, or else.
Wait, guys. Where are you going?

Who are you?

I’m Samia, the community president. I’m here to welcome you to the neighbourhood.

We came here for a friendly game, but some people just can’t handle losing!

You’re not welcome here anymore!

What’s got into you, Khalid?!

We’re neighbours! When did fighting ever solve anything?

So you’re on their side too, Salam?

When did you lose your sportsmanship, Khalid?

I watched the game. Their team played well. They deserved to win.

Honestly, you’re right.
That sounds more like the real you!!

Thank you for being honest, Khalid.

Why not play in Karim’s neighbourhood next time?

You’d be most welcome!

What if we win?

Well, we’d congratulate you!

But what if WE win?

Wonderful!

We’d be very happy to host it!

Why don’t we organize a football tournament for all the neighbourhoods?

Lovely! Do you know what this means?
What?

It could draw huge crowds!

Visitors would buy fruit from Raji’s cart.

And sweets from Um Rabab’s shop.

Great! We’ll combine business with pleasure!

This tournament will attract a lot of visitors.

You could both head the Sports Committee.

Excellent! Sports and healthy competition can bring people together.

Khalid and Karim, why don’t you train and improve your skills by playing together?!

When peace prevails, everybody wins!
The ESCWA team watches over preparations on the football pitch...

... designs invitations for the other neighbourhoods...

... and forms a Sports Committee, jointly chaired by Khalid and Karim.
The feud ended peacefully!

When will people stop fighting, Grandpa?

So then I’m someone that accepts others!

When they accept other people’s differences and find beauty and strength in diversity, instead of feeling threatened.

Definitely! I love gardens with red, yellow, white and orange flowers. Gardens with only one colour are sad, aren’t they?

Yes they are, my beautiful rose.
Story V

Together we prosper
Grandpa, you seem worried.

I’m worried about Khalid’s father.

What’s wrong?

I visited him in his shop yesterday. He was upset. Khalid doesn’t want to work there anymore.

Why?

Khalid was a top student!

I don’t know yet, but I wonder if Khalid’s ambitions lie beyond the shop.

Yes, his father told me.

What’s the problem, then?

Can’t Samia help?

I’m sure she’ll think of something.

I’m afraid Khalid might look for a job outside the neighbourhood.

Maybe. I told him to go to her for advice.
Good morning, Samia!

Hello guys!

AND girls!

Of course! Welcome everyone! Thanks for coming so fast.

Thank YOU for putting your faith in us.

Of course I put my faith in you! Because of your commitment, our community is now an oasis of green with a promising future.

Thanks to you, a young woman from a modest background realized her dream of leading and serving her community.

You’re qualified and ambitious - all we did was support you.

Thanks to your wisdom, Samia, we now have a peaceful relationship with our neighbours.

Don’t mention it! So, how can we help?

Several young people came to me looking for job opportunities.

Thank you!
Are there any?

Khalid was one of them, right?

Khalid is ambitious and skilled. No wonder he’s seeking a better future.

No. I’m hoping you can help.

How did you know?

Why don’t we visit him in his father’s shop?

Let’s go!
I don’t want to work in my father’s shop anymore.

What’s wrong, Khalid?

I’ve been doing the same job, in the same place, for too long. Every day is exactly the same. The only change is that there are fewer and fewer customers.

So are many other young men and women like you. But there are no job opportunities here!

Then help me find a job somewhere else.

What can we do to help?

I’m looking for another job.

Wait! Why don’t we create job opportunities here, instead of looking for them outside our community?

That’s great! Then we could stop the brain drain!

That way, all jobseekers would benefit.

Great idea! But how do we do it?
We invest in the shop. We turn it into a small business that manufactures and trades in local products!

But that’s impossible.

Where there’s a will, there’s a way, Khalid! Let’s think of a solid plan.

First, we’ll need accurate numbers on the scale of production, costs and key skills.

Wait ... wait! Who said I can run a business with employees... merchandise... accounts... clients?!!

What a headache!

Didn’t you attend the training courses we organized?

I did! I have qualifications in accounting, project management and technology... even in psychology! I could do some more courses, too.

Well then, let’s get to work!
Let’s start with an advertising campaign on our website and the neighbouring communities’ websites.

Why don’t we create a website for the business specifically, like we did with my election campaign?

It will create delivery jobs.

And jobs in the recycling industry, too.

Great idea! That would let people communicate directly with the business and order products online.

I’ll need computers! Internet connection! And people who can use them. Impossible!

We could get computers the same way we did for the school.

Khalid, sorry to say this but you’re only seeing the obstacles. Let’s put our heads together - we’ll find solutions!

We could invite young jobseekers to attend online courses and gain key skills.

How will we finance it?

The community could help you get a small loan from the microfinance institution.

Because you’ll be creating jobs for the neighbourhood.

Why not lease some space on your premises to other businesses?

Excellent idea! Raji, for example, wants to start selling fresh juice, as well as his organic fruit.
Work begins and Khalid’s business project is well underway...

Young people flock to gain new skills and apply for jobs.

Signs of prosperity are visible across the neighbourhood and are spreading to other communities.
The Mall
You've got a big smile on your face.

I finished writing my novel!

Oh really! How does it end?

What's the title?

With our neighbourhood flourishing!
Tales of the ESCWA friends!
We are ESCWA
We work with passion
We bring hope to the region
We desire life for every boy
And our concern
Are our wealth
Our youth
For every girl
We enrich with knowledge
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