

# THE ESCWA STORIES

Volume 4



**Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia - ESCWA**

**Drawings: Ralf Doumit**

**First Edition  
Beirut 2024**



Shared Prosperity Dignified Life



## 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.**

**Most of 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 strive to achieve prosperity in their neighbourhood, which represents the country.**

**Ward and her grandfather are from two different generations; they represent the continued past-to-future concept of sustainable development.**



**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.

## Meet ESCWA's friends



**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

## A duty, not a favour!







Neighbourhood square



I got you the painting kit you asked for.

Thanks, Grandpa.



You don't like it?



Of course I do.

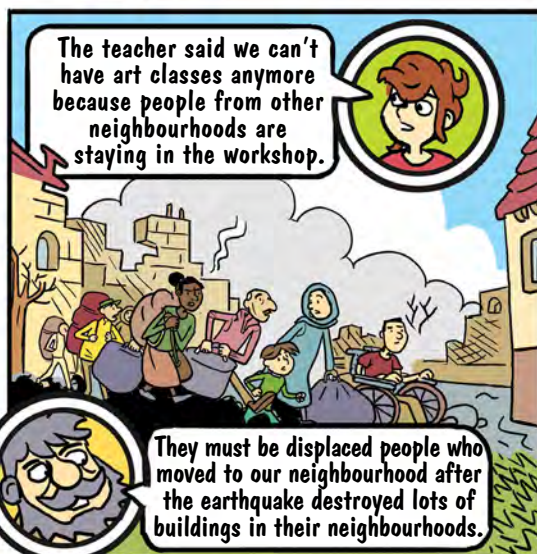
What's wrong then?

I don't know if I'll get to use it soon.



Why?

The teacher said we can't have art classes anymore because people from other neighbourhoods are staying in the workshop.



They must be displaced people who moved to our neighbourhood after the earthquake destroyed lots of buildings in their neighbourhoods.

What does displaced people mean?

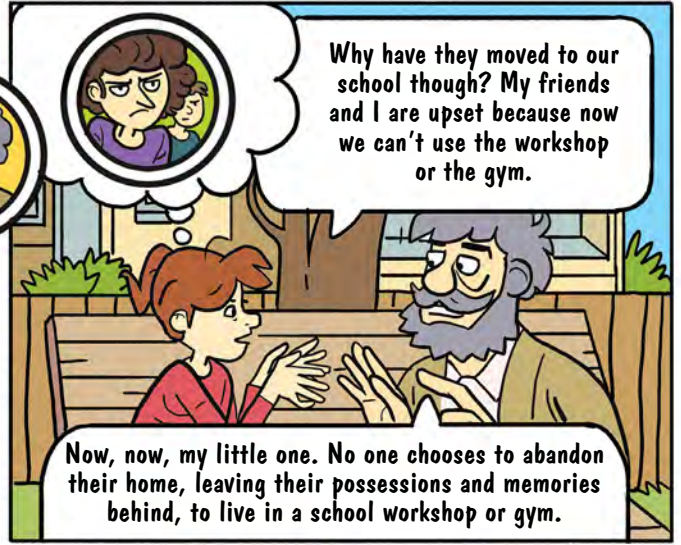




By displaced people, we mean persons who are forced to leave their homes because of natural disasters, armed conflicts, or human rights violations, and move to other areas within the same country.



Why have they moved to our school though? My friends and I are upset because now we can't use the workshop or the gym.



Now, now, my little one. No one chooses to abandon their home, leaving their possessions and memories behind, to live in a school workshop or gym.

Will they stay for ages?



It's impossible to say.

That means we can't have art classes until they go back home!



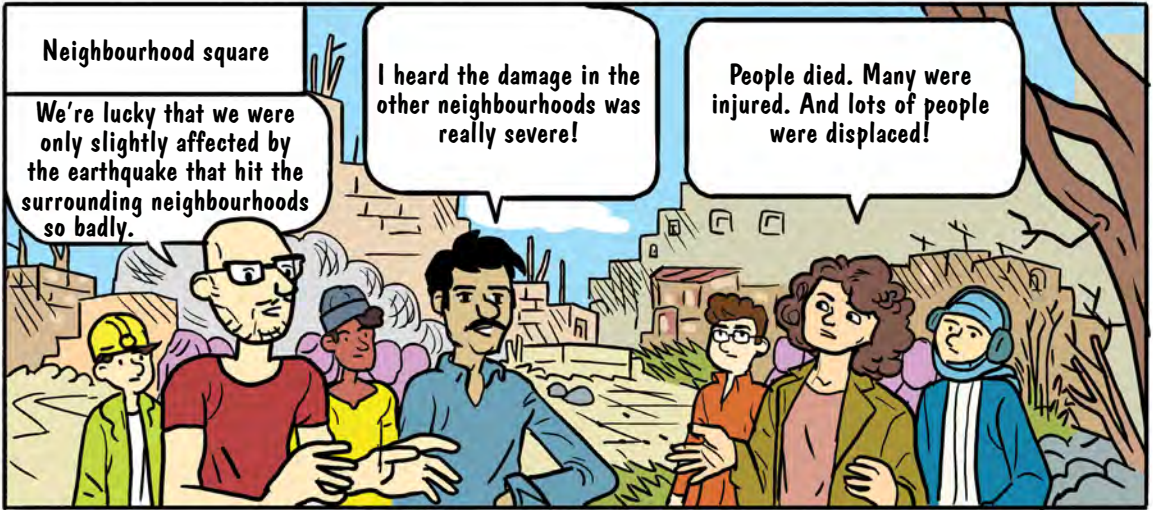
Instead of complaining, sweetheart, it would be better if you and your friends thought about how you might help the displaced children.



I'll think about it, Grandpa...





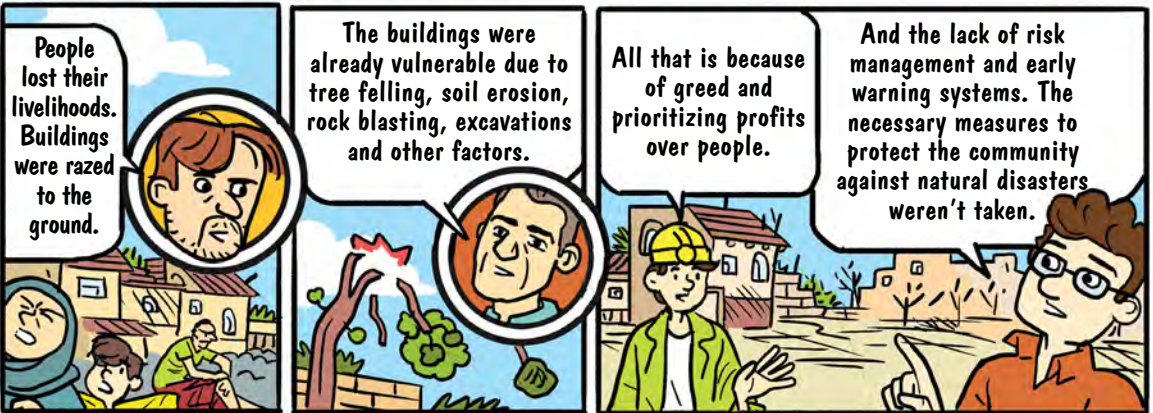


**Neighbourhood square**

We're lucky that we were only slightly affected by the earthquake that hit the surrounding neighbourhoods so badly.

I heard the damage in the other neighbourhoods was really severe!

People died. Many were injured. And lots of people were displaced!



People lost their livelihoods. Buildings were razed to the ground.

The buildings were already vulnerable due to tree felling, soil erosion, rock blasting, excavations and other factors.

All that is because of greed and prioritizing profits over people.

And the lack of risk management and early warning systems. The necessary measures to protect the community against natural disasters weren't taken.



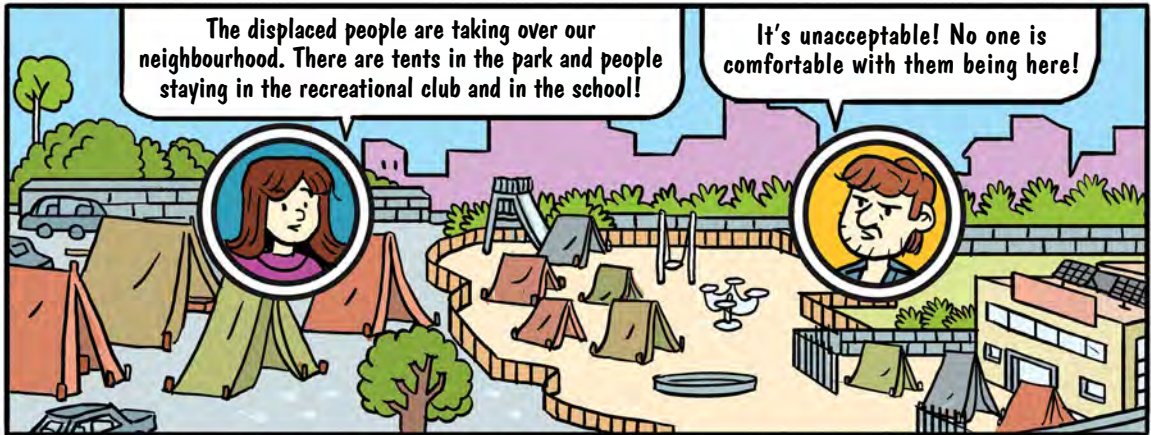
All these factors mean that people are even more at risk when earthquakes and natural disasters occur due to climate change!

I don't care about what is causing the disasters, I care that we are the ones paying the price!

We have to increase awareness, establish institutions to manage natural disasters, and implement early warning and risk assessment systems.

What do you mean, Mona?





The displaced people are taking over our neighbourhood. There are tents in the park and people staying in the recreational club and in the school!

It's unacceptable! No one is comfortable with them being here!



Do you know what is really unacceptable, Nader? That we are sleeping safely in our homes while our neighbours are sleeping in public facilities without access to the most basic rights and services!

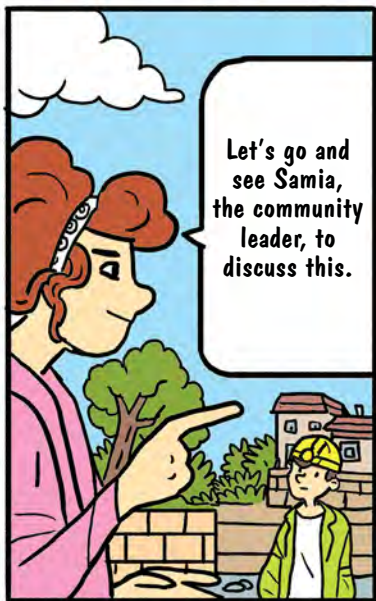
You're right, Adila.



So, what's the solution?



We need to find a solution that works for both the neighbourhood community and the displaced people.



Let's go and see Samia, the community leader, to discuss this.



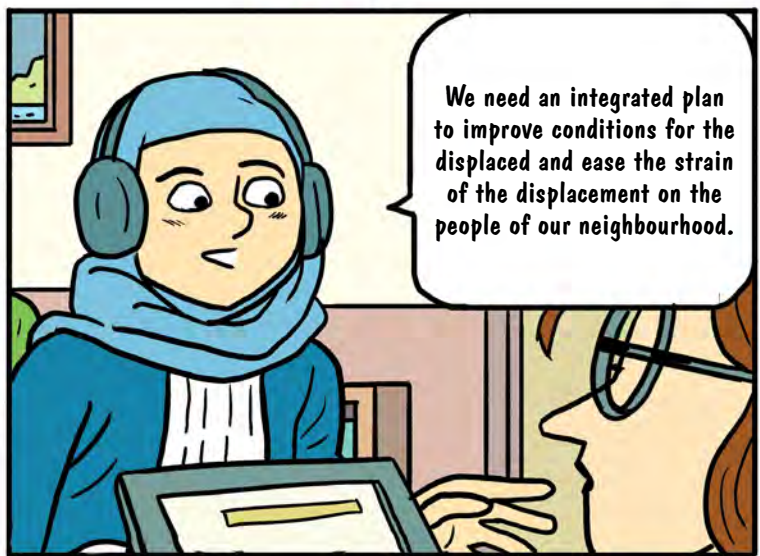
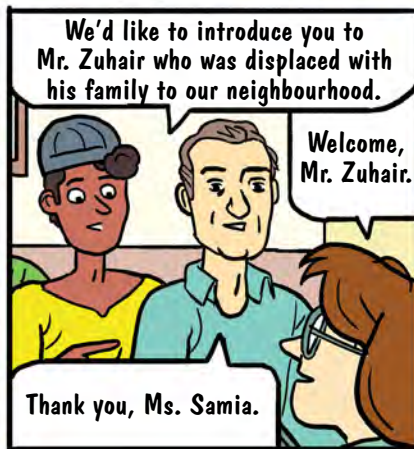
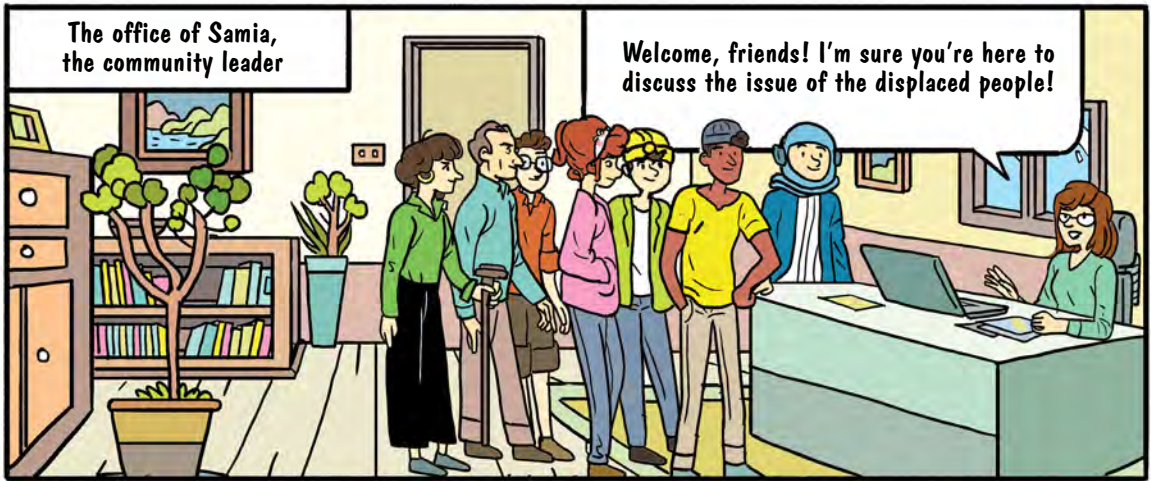
Let's bring Mr. Zuhair with us to be a representative for the displaced people. He is in constant contact with them and knows their situation and their needs.

Good idea, Adila. No one knows their needs and priorities better than the displaced people themselves.

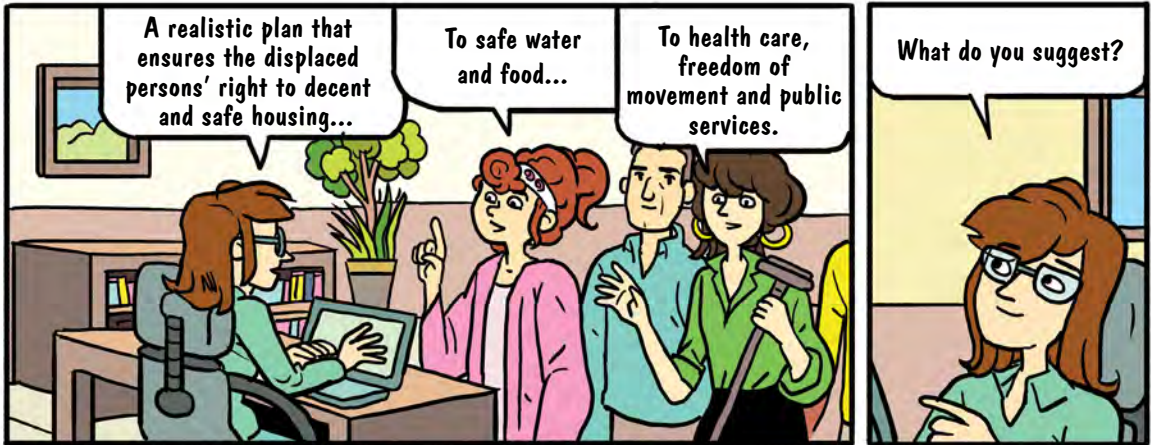


Our priorities are for our basic rights to be respected and for our daily needs to be met until we can safely return home!









Also, Samia, don't forget to ask the medical centre to provide free health care to the displaced people.



And counselling as well.

Good idea, Izdihar, especially for women and girls. During crises, with all the pressure, they often experience violence from family members who take out their stress on them.



That's very important. Studies show that violence against women, which is already widespread in the Arab region, increases in times of crisis.



All your ideas are great. Hopefully we can return to our homes very soon and stop being a burden on your community.

Caring for you is a moral duty, not a burden.



Sadly, many of the displaced community have told me that they are experiencing discrimination and harassment from some people in the neighbourhood.



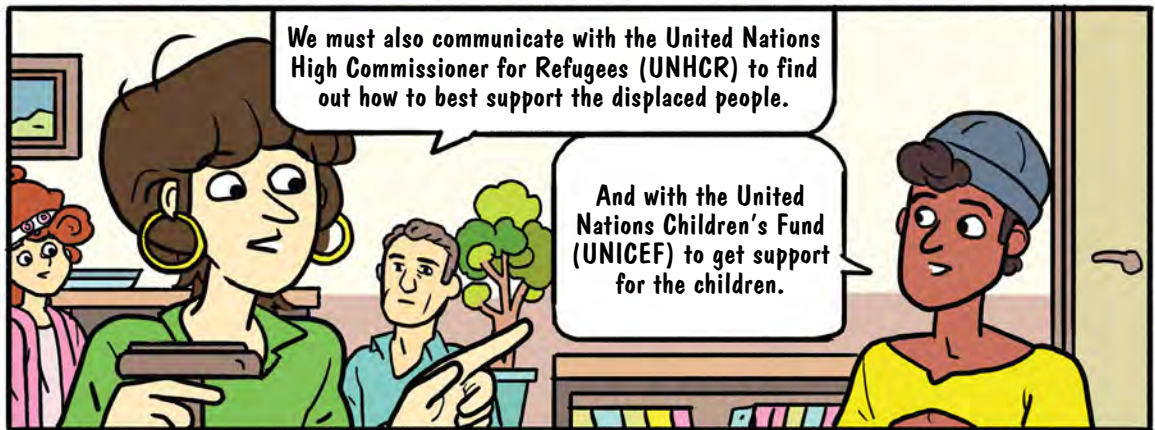
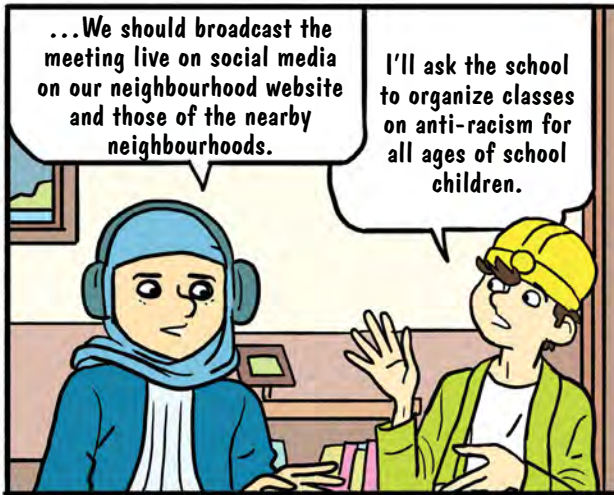
I was worried this would happen!

It's bound to happen when the integration of displaced people into the host society isn't properly organized and when the neighbourhood people aren't aware of the rights of the displaced.

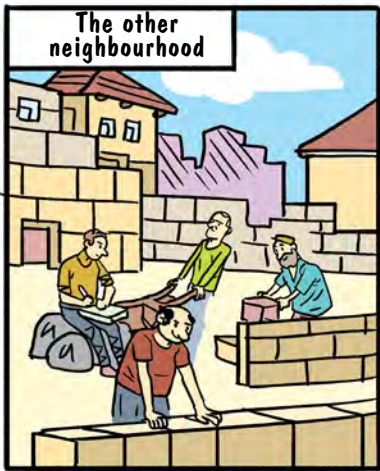
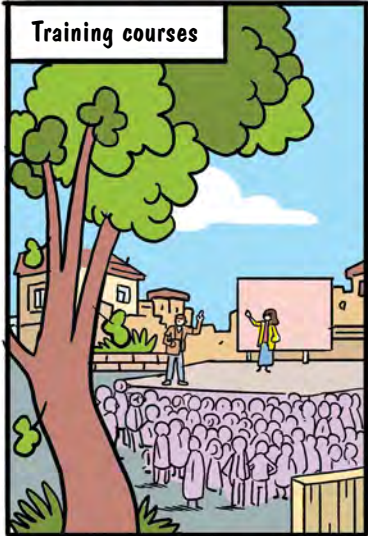


You're right. Let's organize a session in the municipal hall to raise awareness regarding the rights of the displaced and ways to combat racism and xenophobia...

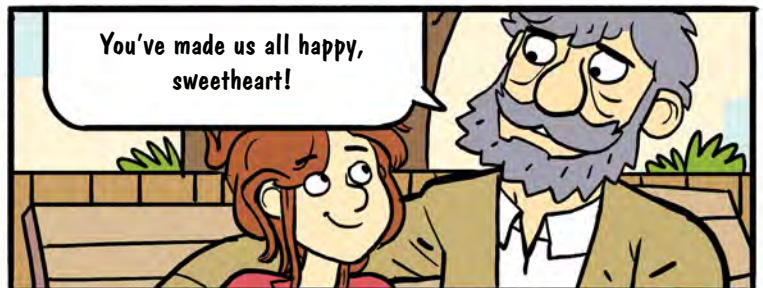












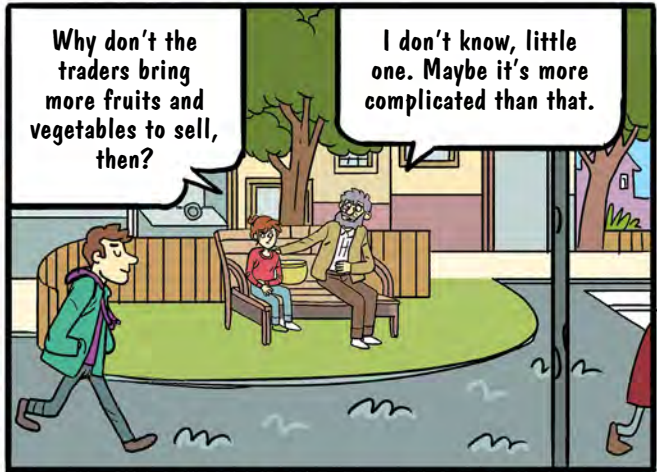
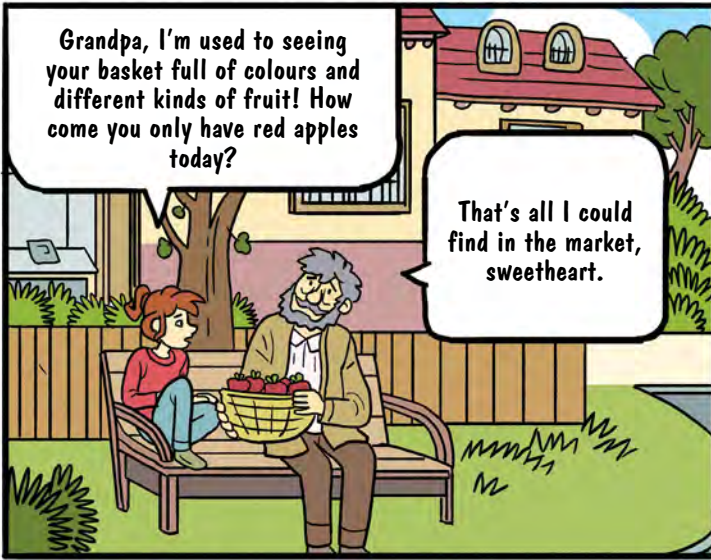
# Story II

## Magical farming!

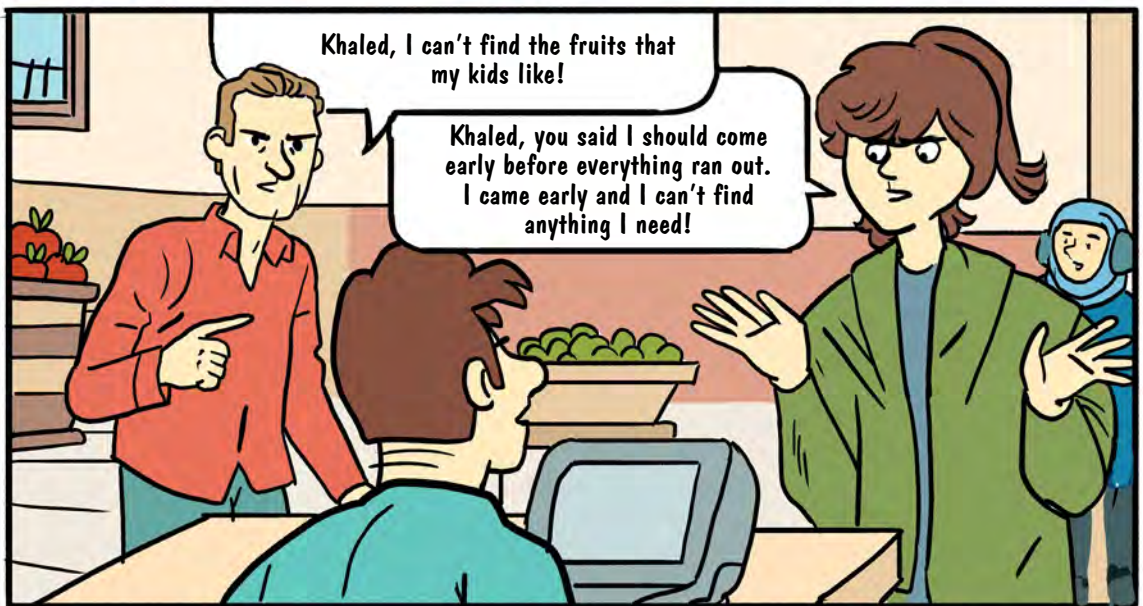
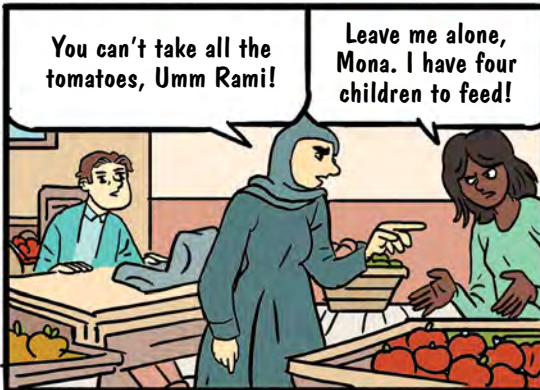




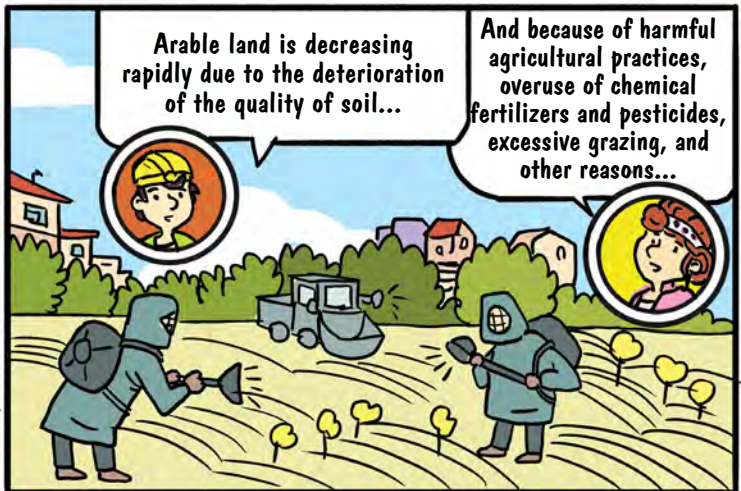
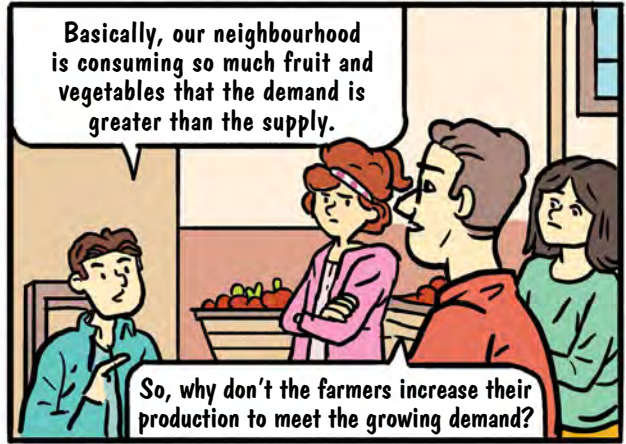




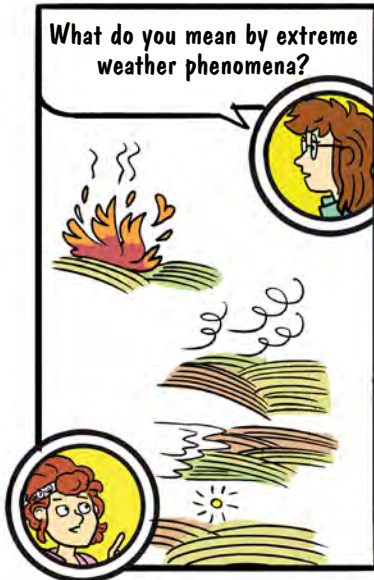
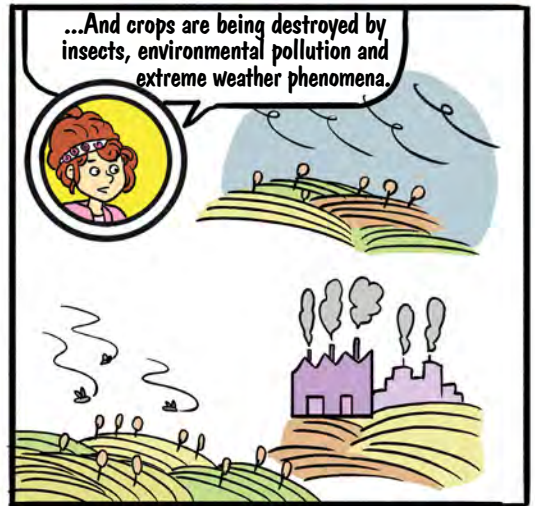




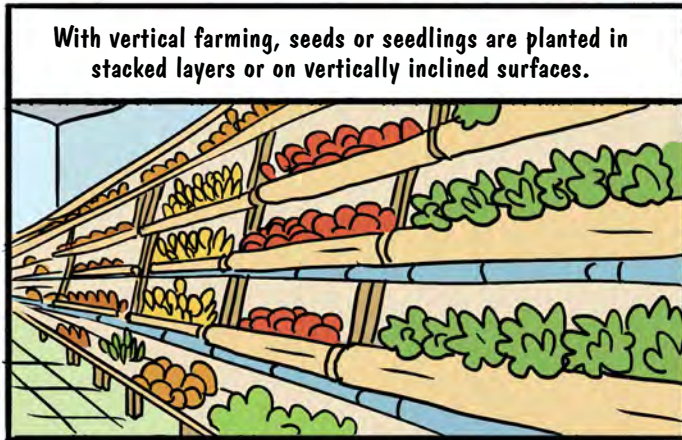














Technologically advanced equipment is used to adjust the temperature and control lighting, and for sterilization and irrigation using smart distillation, and more...

Vertical farming actually produces far higher crop yields per square metre than traditional agriculture.

For example, traditional farming can produce four kilograms of tomatoes per square metre of soil. Vertical farming can produce eight kilograms per square metre.

With vertical farming, there are multiple harvesting seasons during the year.

What do you mean?

If the ideal climatic conditions are created, lettuce, spinach, mint, tomatoes, cucumbers, basil, beans, peppers, mushrooms, medicinal herbs, and others can be grown and harvested all year round.

Because the ideal environment for each plant can be created and maintained, the quality of crops is better than that of traditional agriculture.

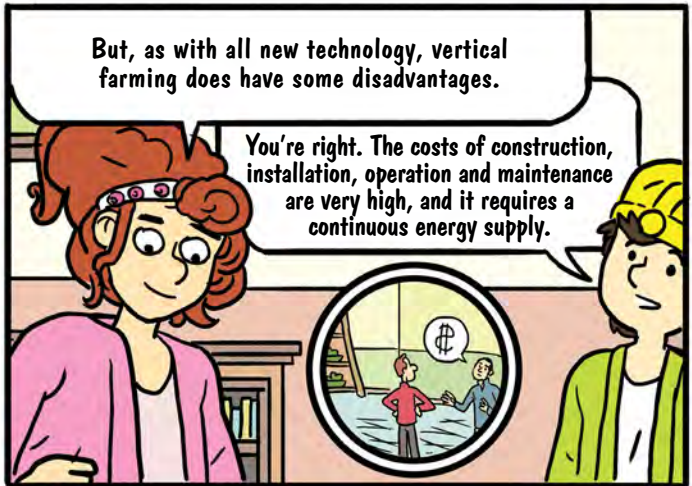
That's right!

This also means that vertical farming can contribute to achieving food security...

...And can reduce conflict over food.



So many benefits!



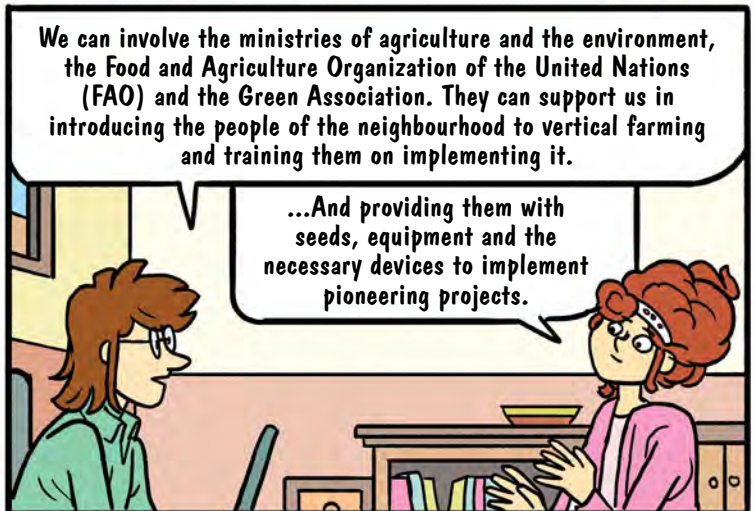
But, as with all new technology, vertical farming does have some disadvantages.

You're right. The costs of construction, installation, operation and maintenance are very high, and it requires a continuous energy supply.



Nevertheless, it is a worthwhile investment in the long term.

What if we wanted to install it in our neighbourhood?



We can involve the ministries of agriculture and the environment, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Green Association. They can support us in introducing the people of the neighbourhood to vertical farming and training them on implementing it.

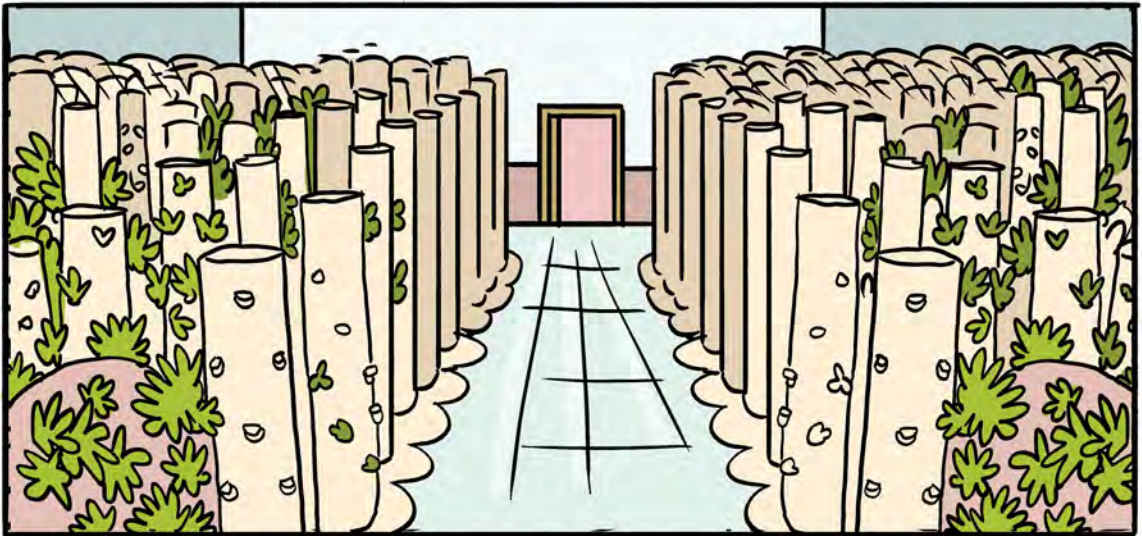
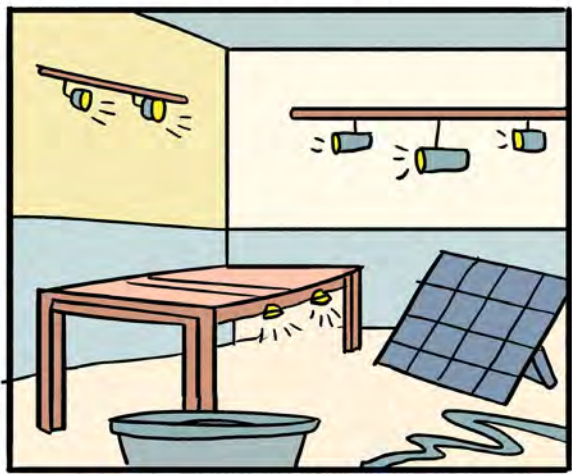
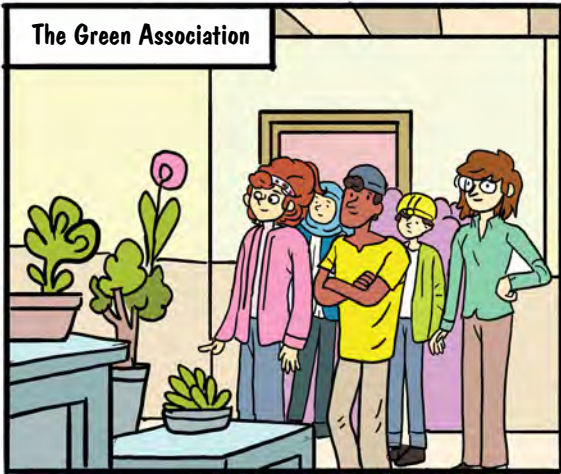
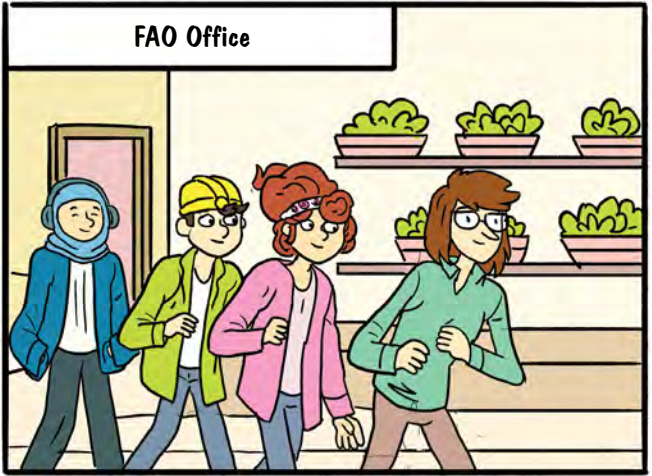
...And providing them with seeds, equipment and the necessary devices to implement pioneering projects.



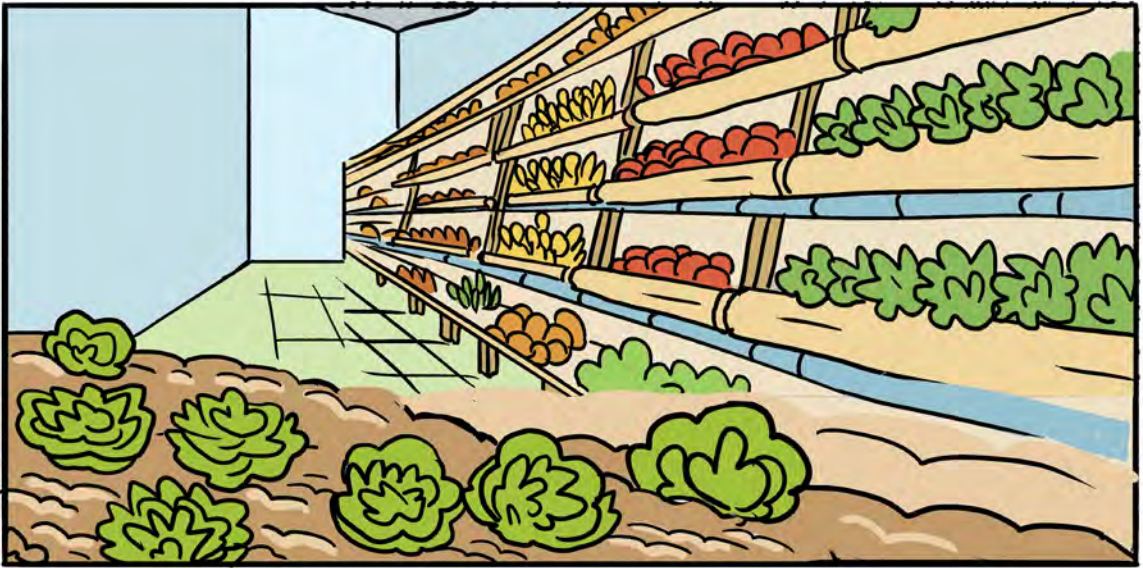
Let's ask the Agricultural Development Fund and the Agricultural Bank to grant soft loans to men and women from the community who are interested in implementing these projects.

Excellent ideas. It's time to get to work!

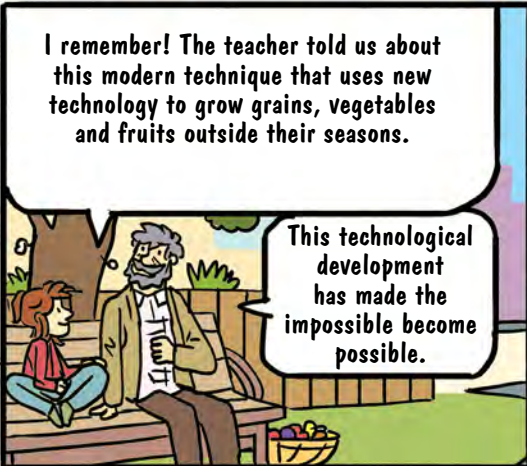
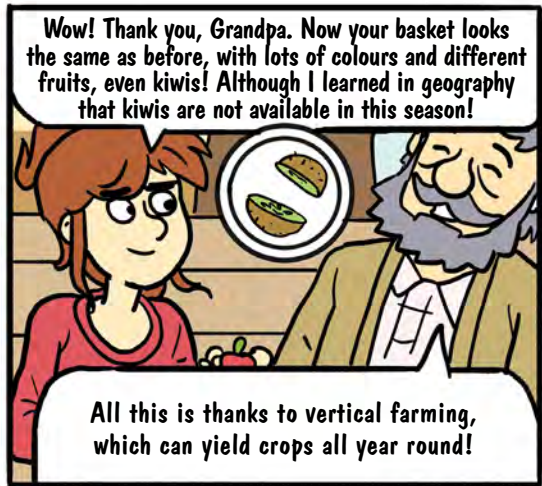
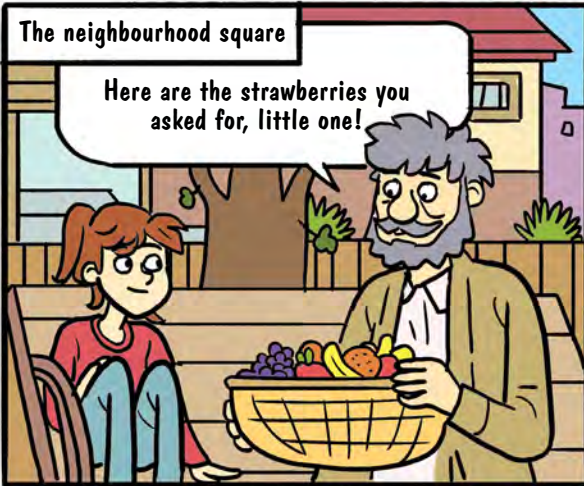






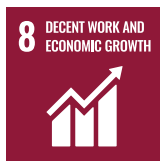






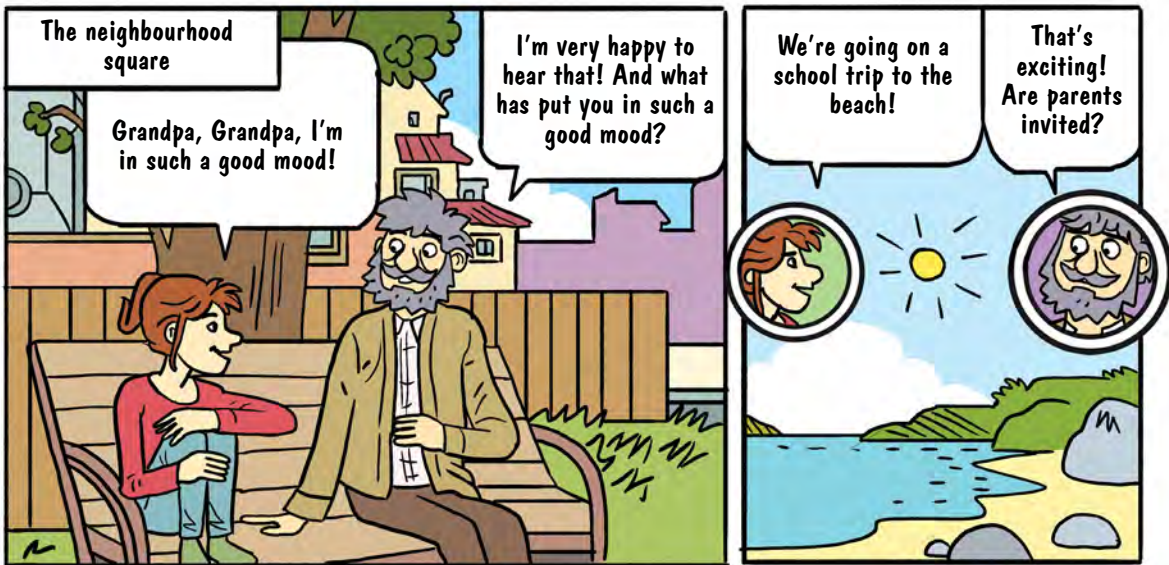
# Story III

## Beautiful blue!









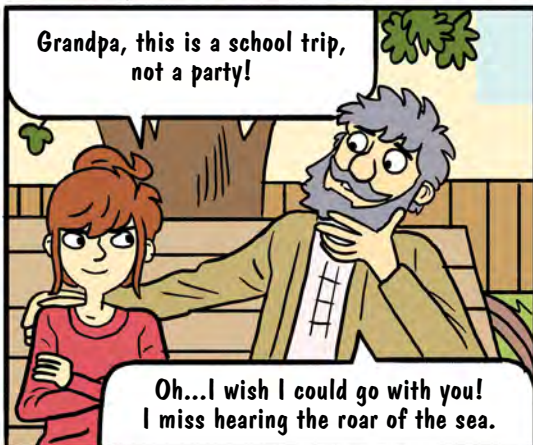
The neighbourhood square

Grandpa, Grandpa, I'm in such a good mood!

I'm very happy to hear that! And what has put you in such a good mood?

We're going on a school trip to the beach!

That's exciting! Are parents invited?



Grandpa, this is a school trip, not a party!

Oh...I wish I could go with you! I miss hearing the roar of the sea.



Awwww. Don't be sad, Grandpa, if you can't go to the sea, I will bring it to you!

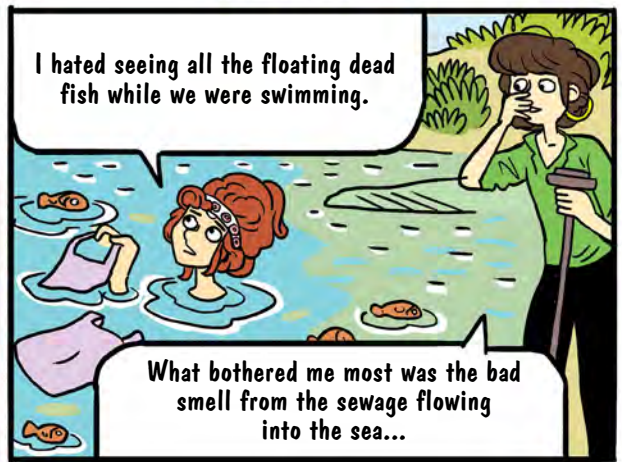
Really?! And how exactly?



Be patient, Grandpa, and don't spoil the surprise!

Ok then, I won't. Patience is always rewarded!









Seeing the plastic and the hospital waste is horrifying. There were syringes, serums, bottles of old medication, and other toxic waste...

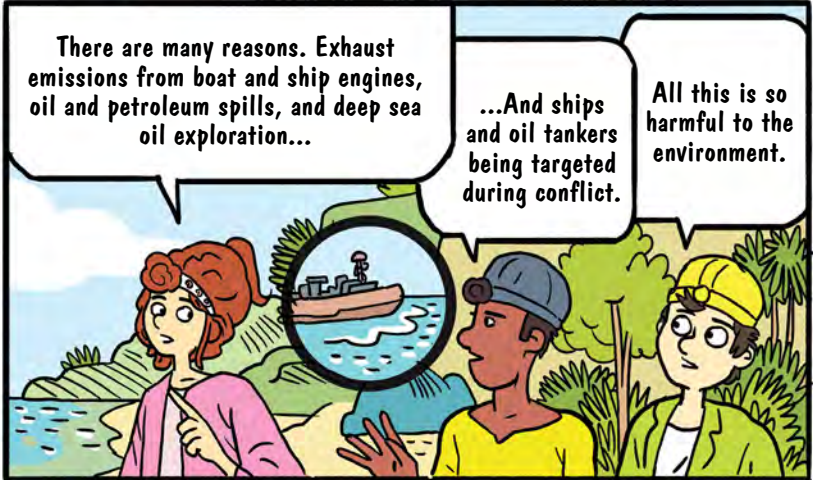


Did the sea water feel sticky to you?

Of course! It's because of the oil and petroleum.



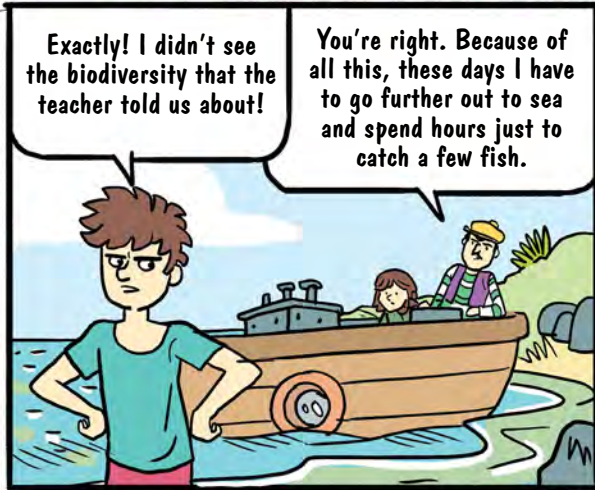
Why is that happening?



There are many reasons. Exhaust emissions from boat and ship engines, oil and petroleum spills, and deep sea oil exploration...

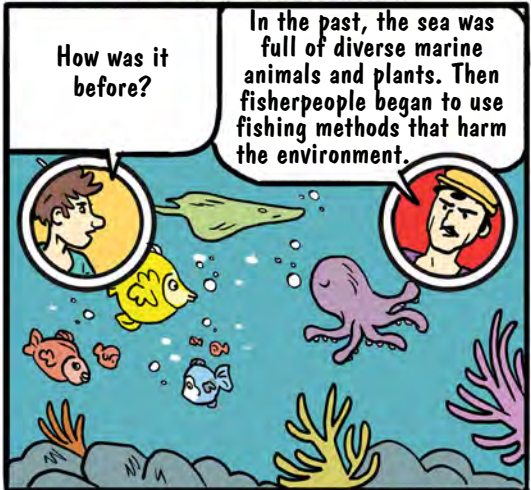
...And ships and oil tankers being targeted during conflict.

All this is so harmful to the environment.



Exactly! I didn't see the biodiversity that the teacher told us about!

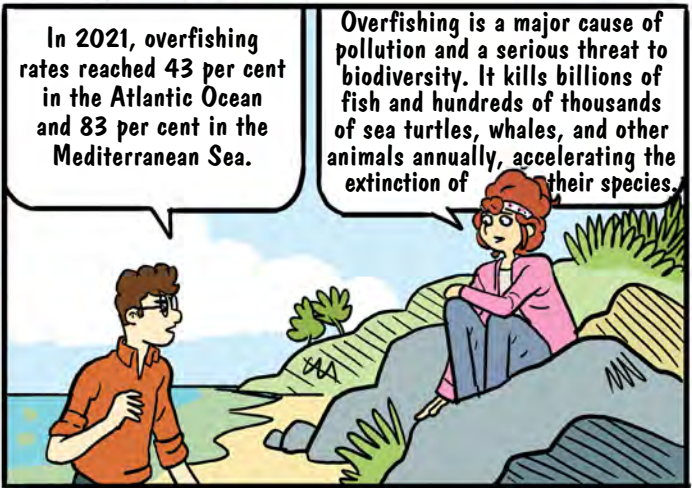
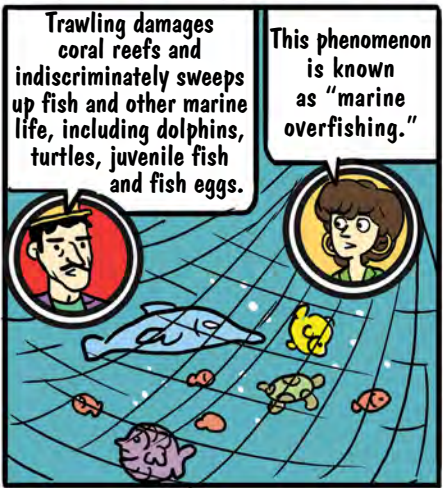
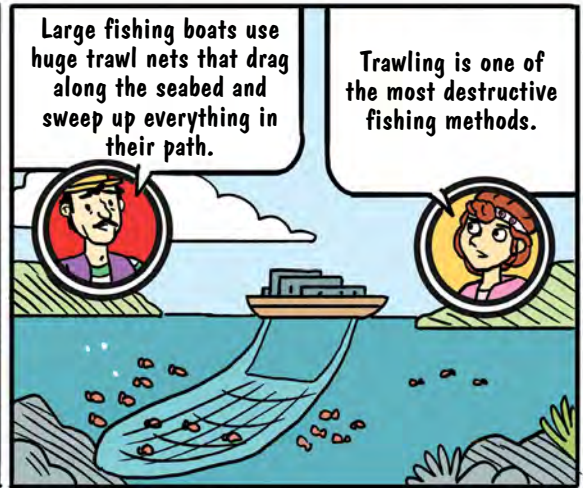
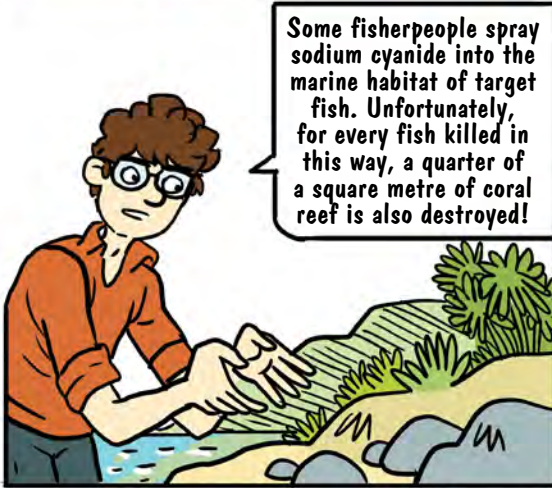
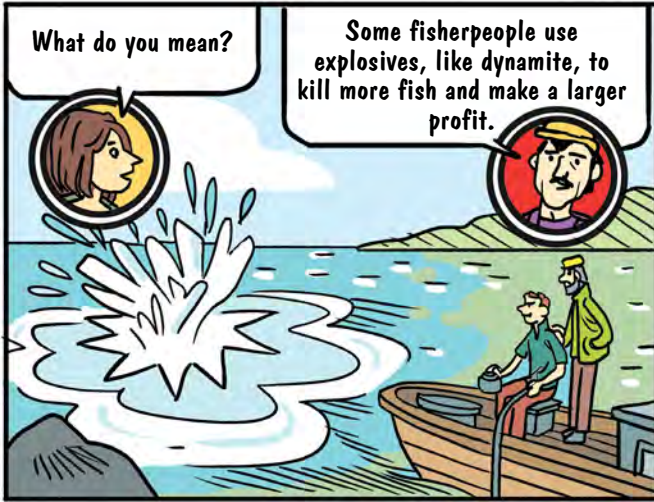
You're right. Because of all this, these days I have to go further out to sea and spend hours just to catch a few fish.



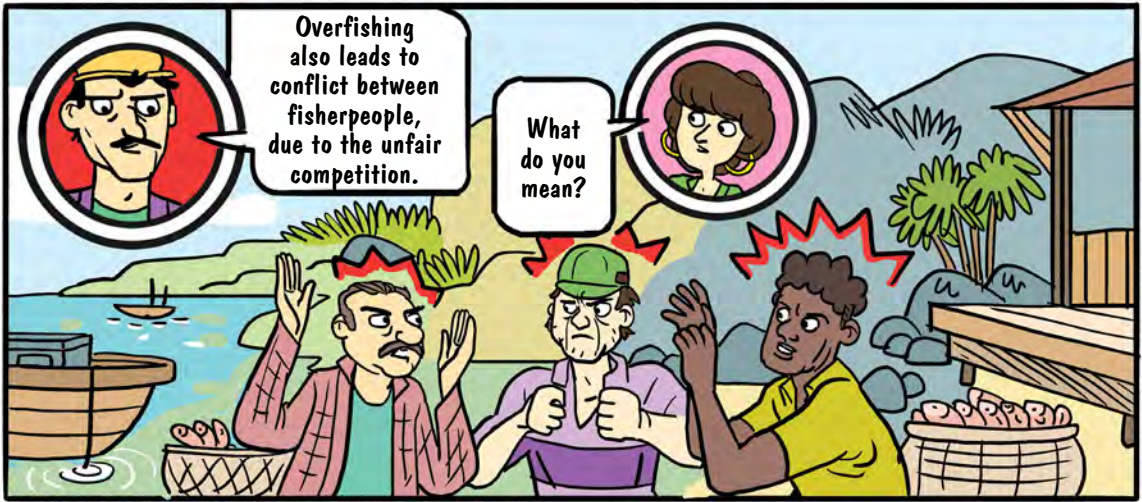
How was it before?

In the past, the sea was full of diverse marine animals and plants. Then fisherpeople began to use fishing methods that harm the environment.

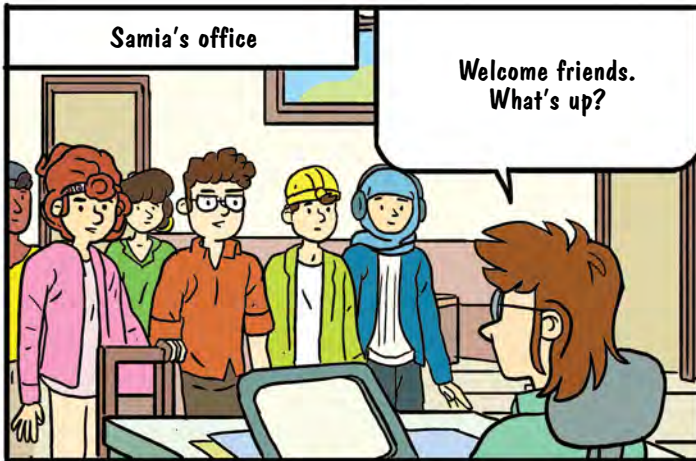












Samia's office

Welcome friends.  
What's up?



We just returned from a trip  
to the sea.

It seems the trip  
made you tired.



It made us sad more than tired!  
The beautiful blue of the sea has  
disappeared, Samia.



This is awful! We have to  
limit damage to the sea.  
But what can we do?

It's a huge and  
complex problem,  
and it requires  
everyone to  
take action  
immediately.

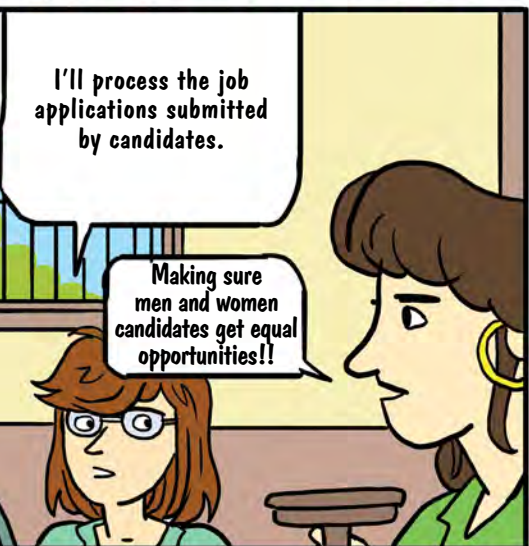
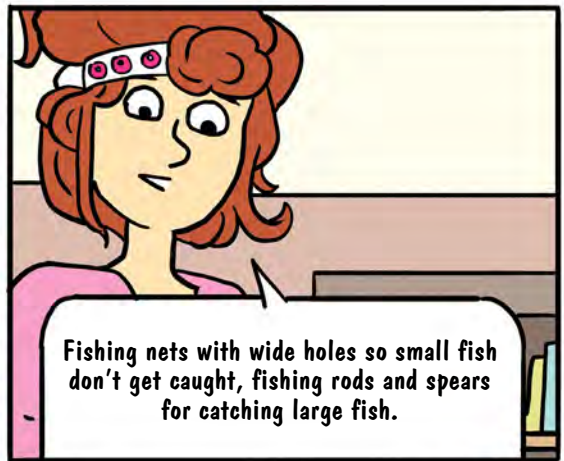


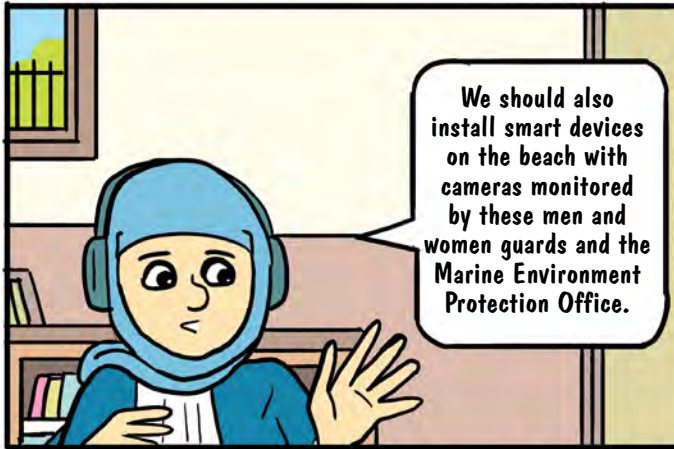
So, let's develop  
a comprehensive  
plan.

We should start with awareness  
campaigns, in-person and virtual,  
for schoolchildren and residents  
of the neighbourhood about  
the damage to the environment  
and humans caused by dumping  
municipal and industrial waste  
into the sea.

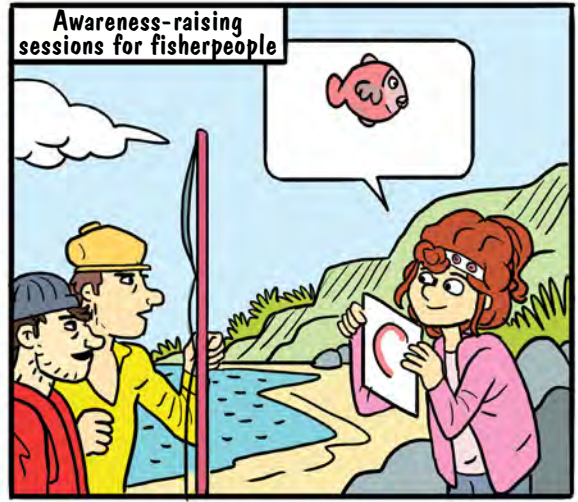
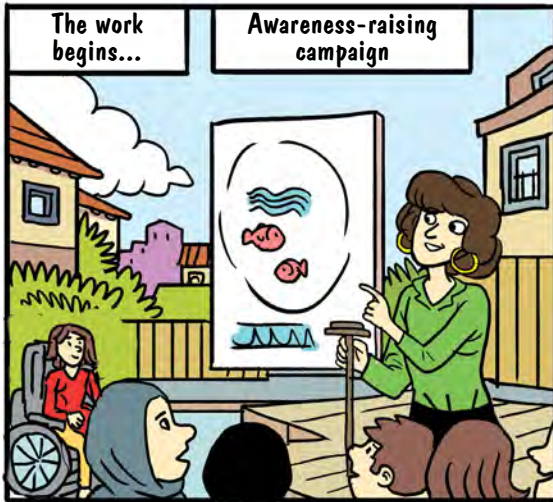




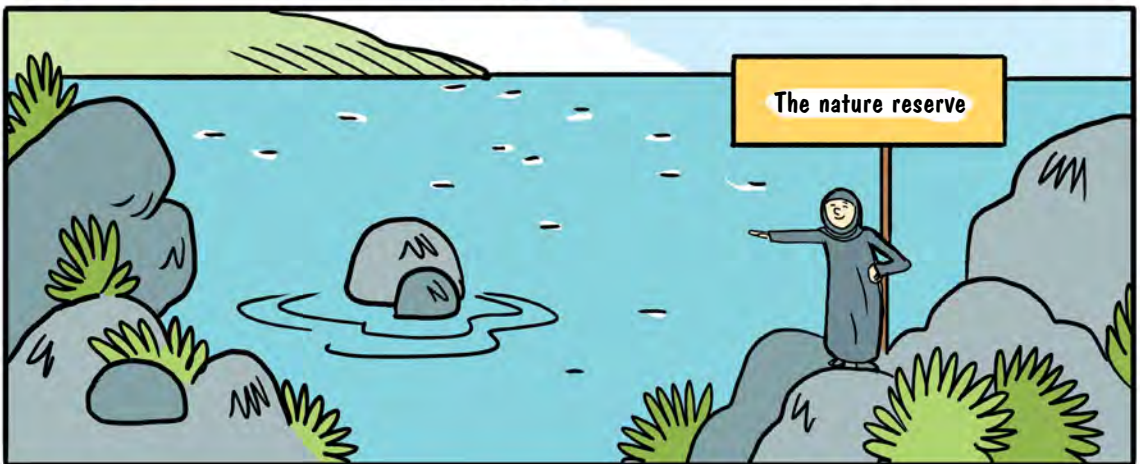
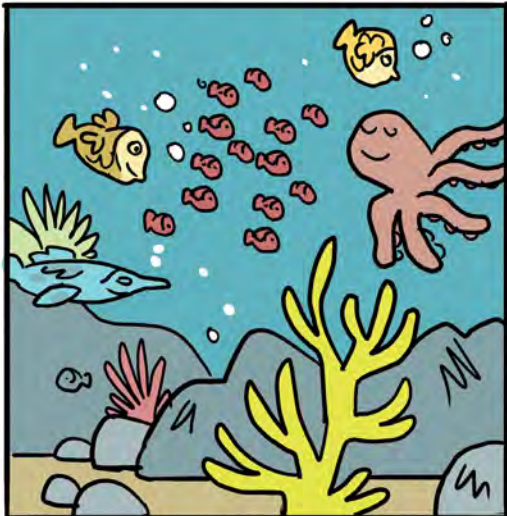
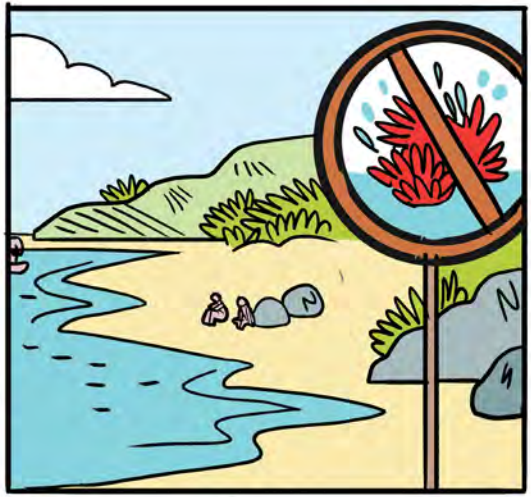
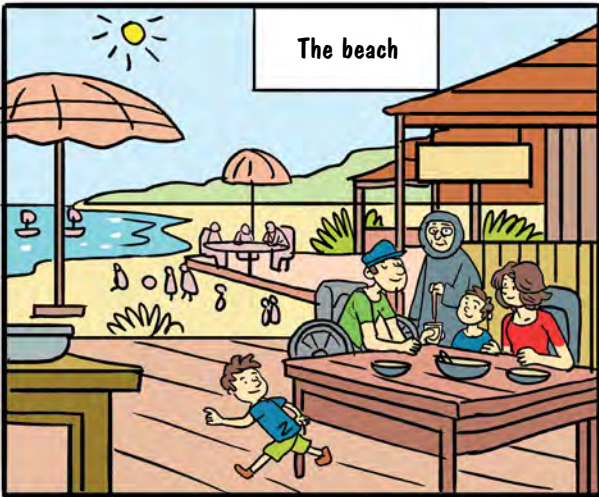
















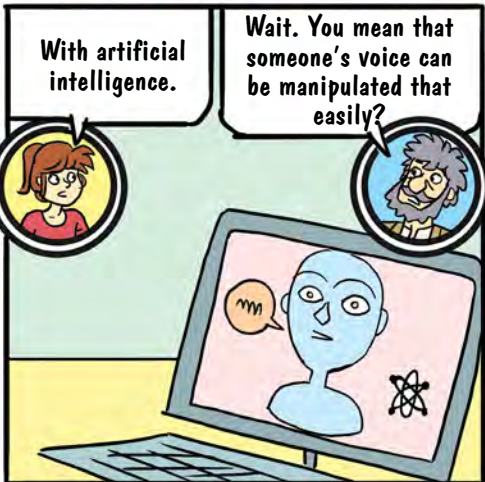
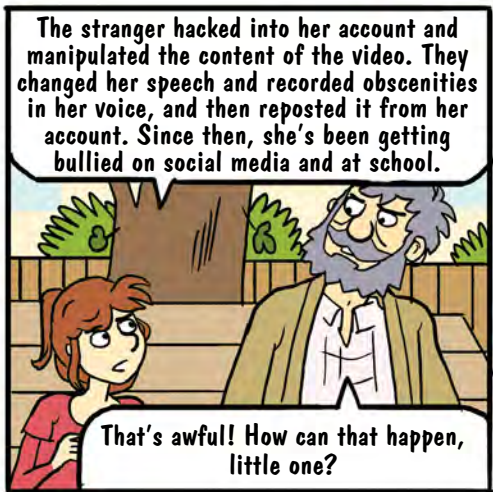
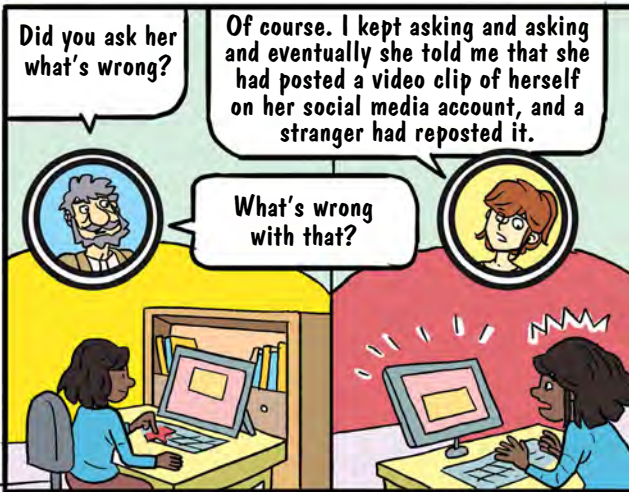
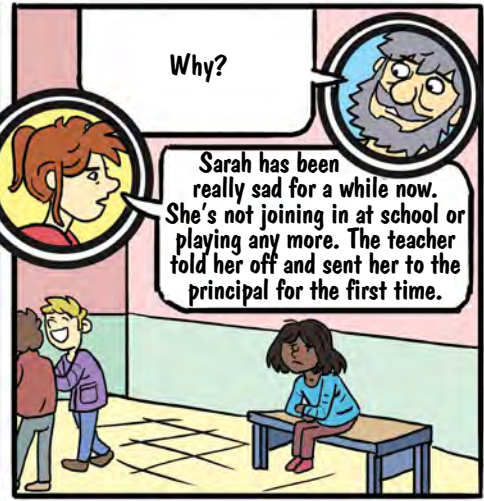
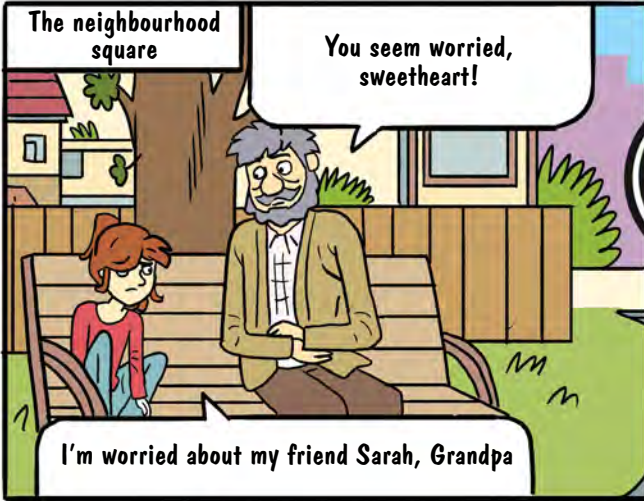
## Story IV

# A blessing ... and a curse!

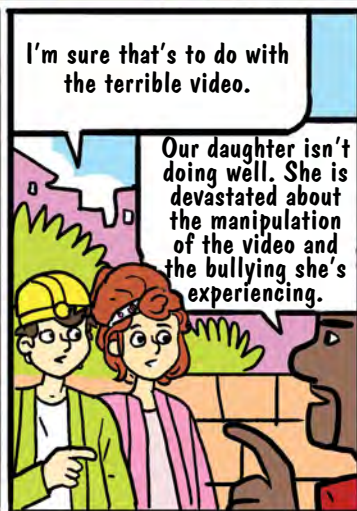




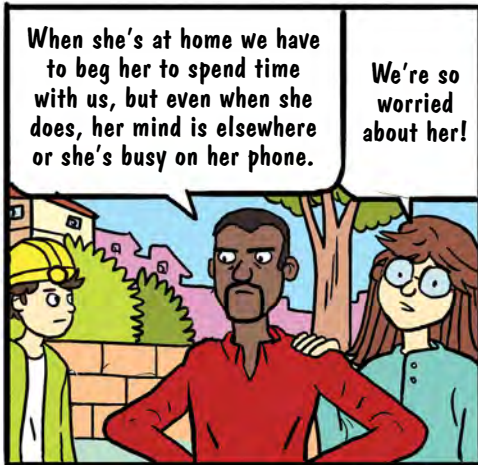












When she's at home we have to beg her to spend time with us, but even when she does, her mind is elsewhere or she's busy on her phone.

We're so worried about her!



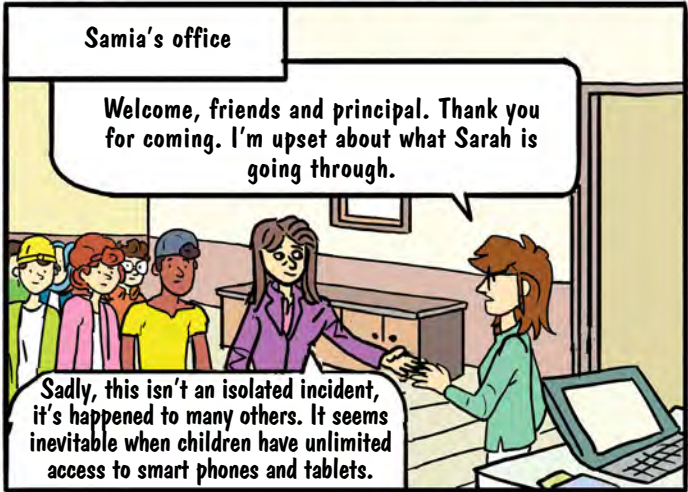
How can we help?

We can't undo what happened, but we can help Sarah overcome this nightmare.



And we can prevent this from happening again or to other people.

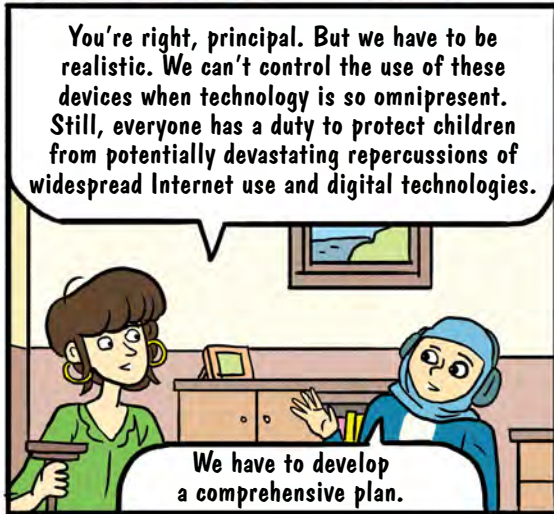
It's complicated and dangerous! Samia asked us to come to her office. I'm sure she wants to talk about this issue.



Samia's office

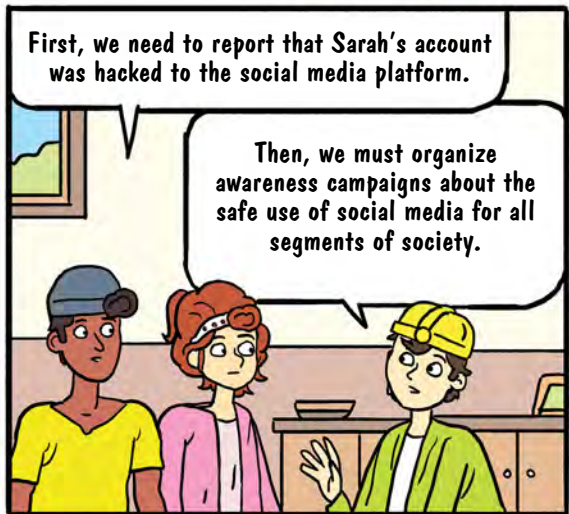
Welcome, friends and principal. Thank you for coming. I'm upset about what Sarah is going through.

Sadly, this isn't an isolated incident, it's happened to many others. It seems inevitable when children have unlimited access to smart phones and tablets.



You're right, principal. But we have to be realistic. We can't control the use of these devices when technology is so omnipresent. Still, everyone has a duty to protect children from potentially devastating repercussions of widespread Internet use and digital technologies.

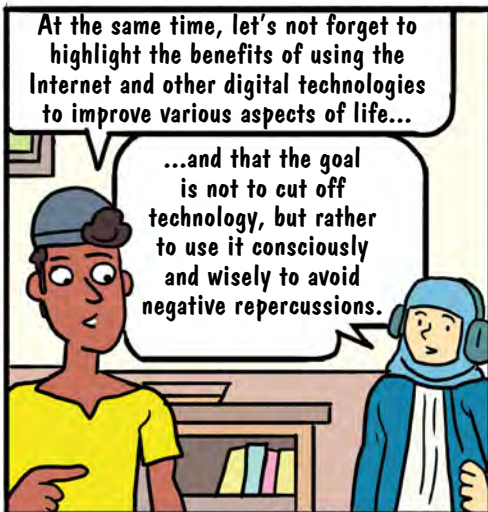
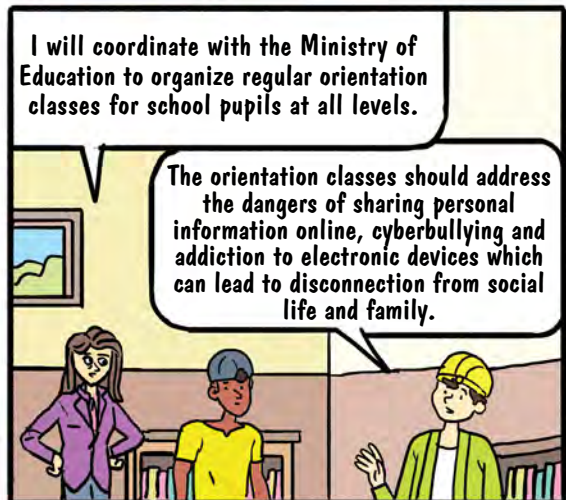
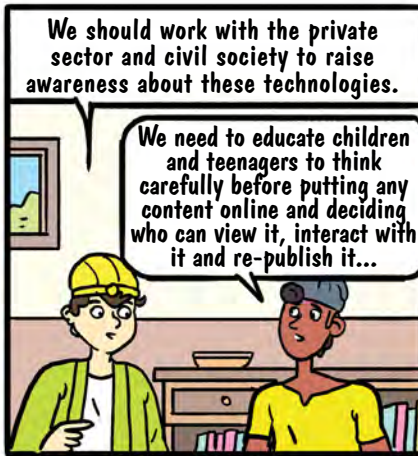
We have to develop a comprehensive plan.

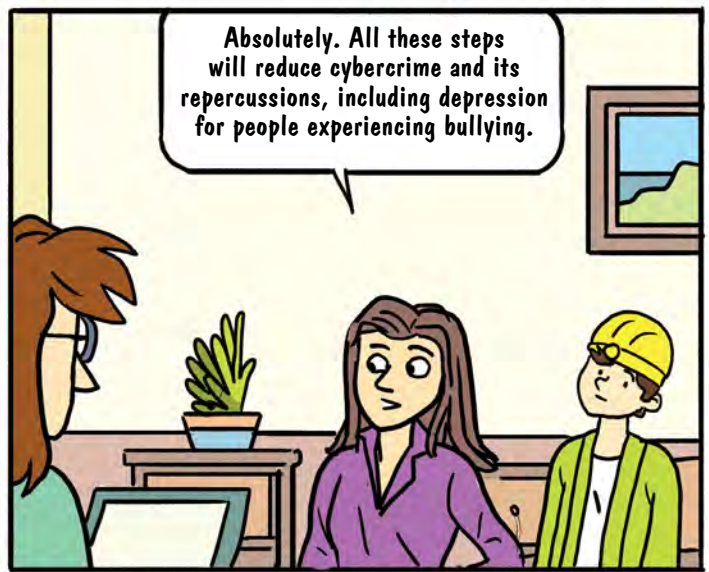


First, we need to report that Sarah's account was hacked to the social media platform.

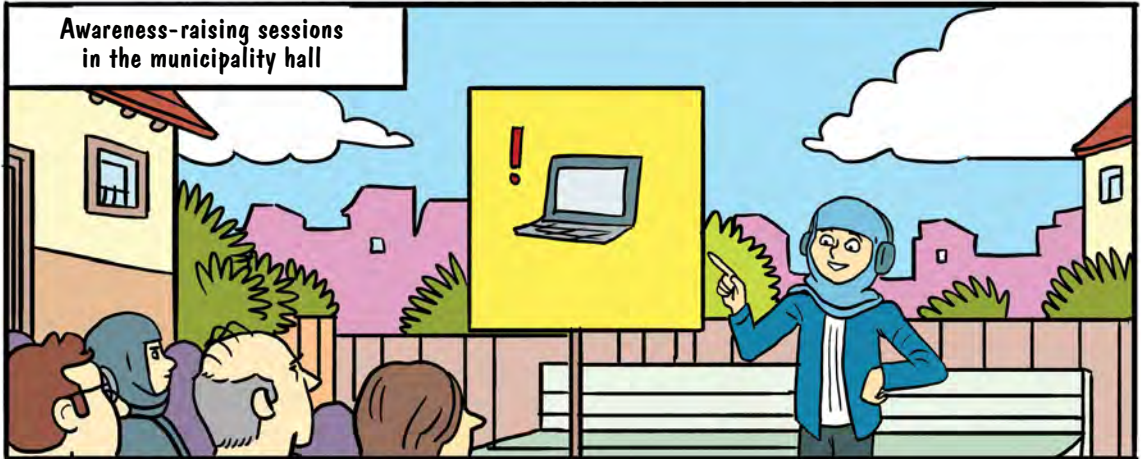
Then, we must organize awareness campaigns about the safe use of social media for all segments of society.

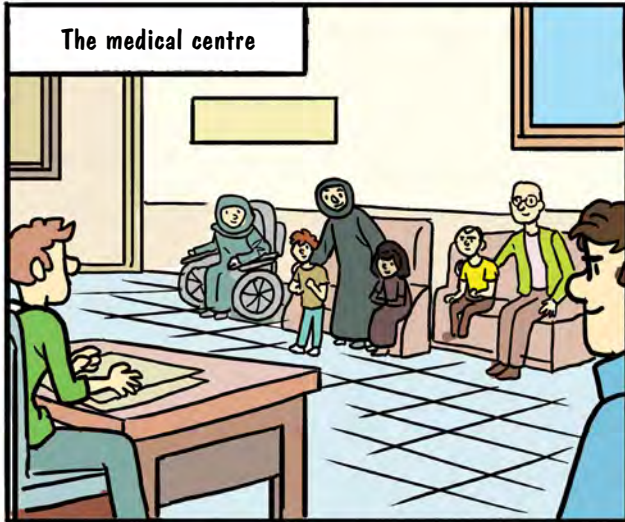
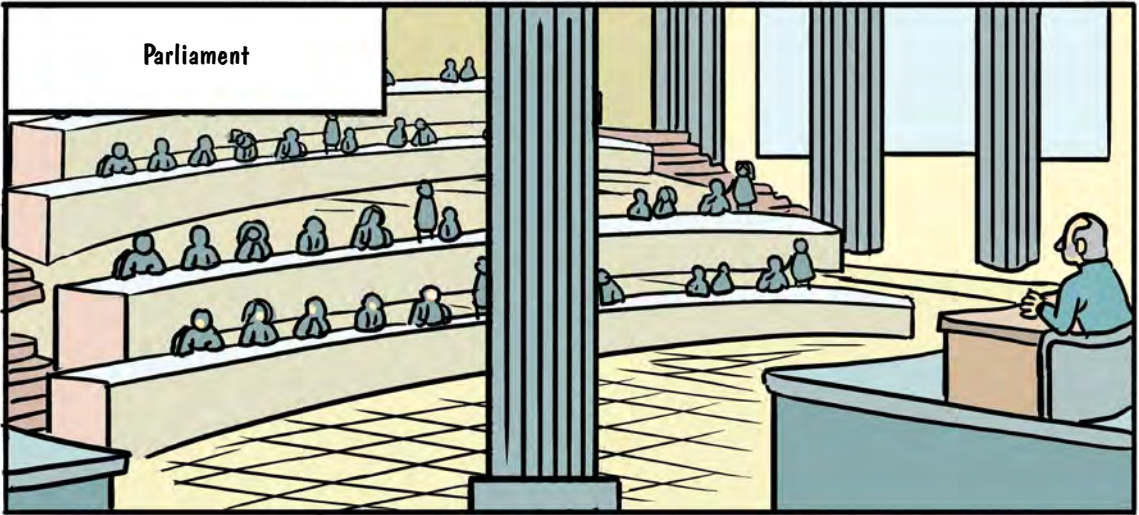




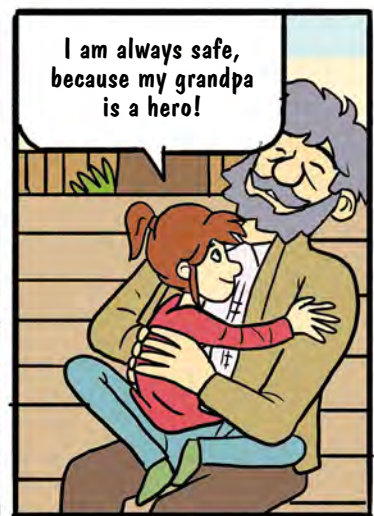
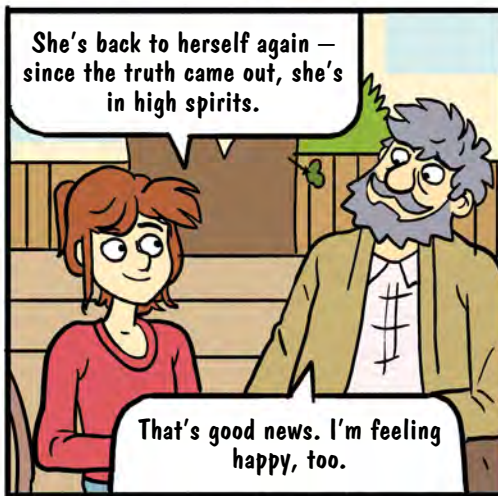
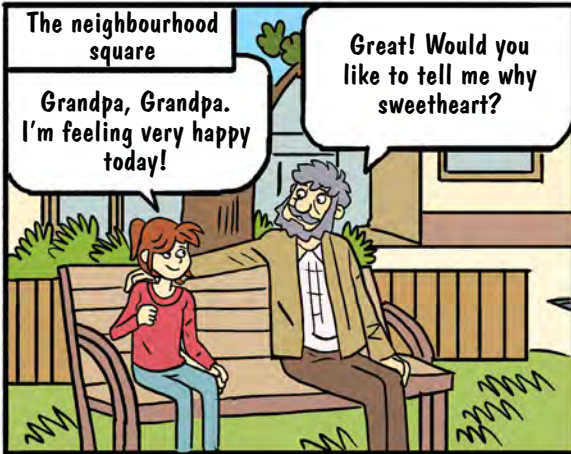






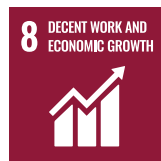






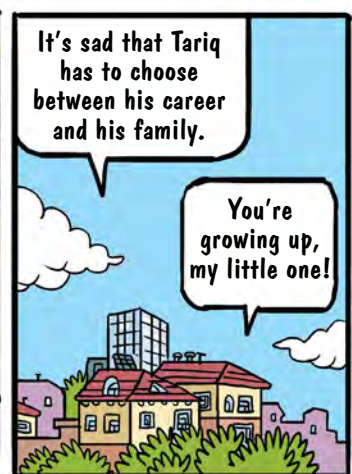
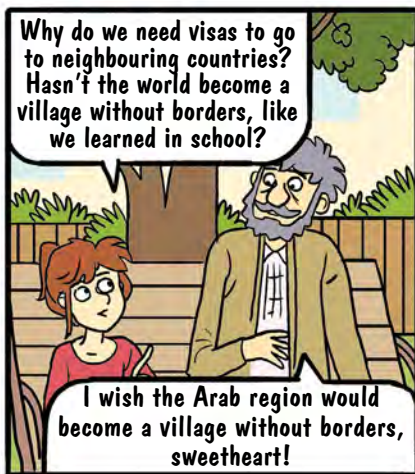
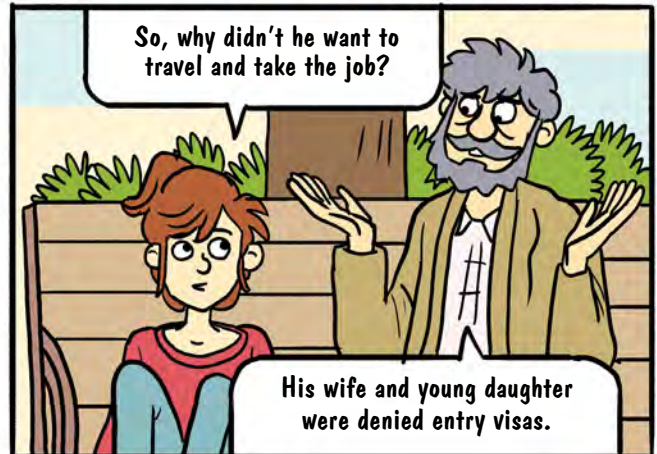
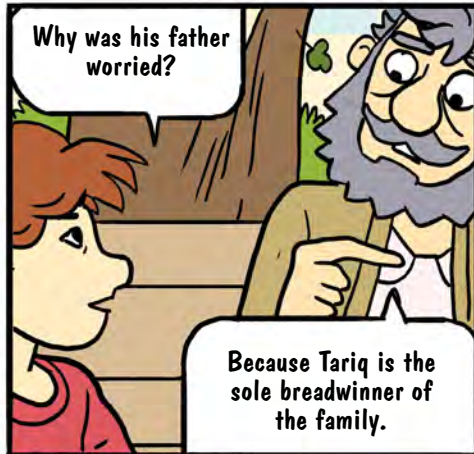
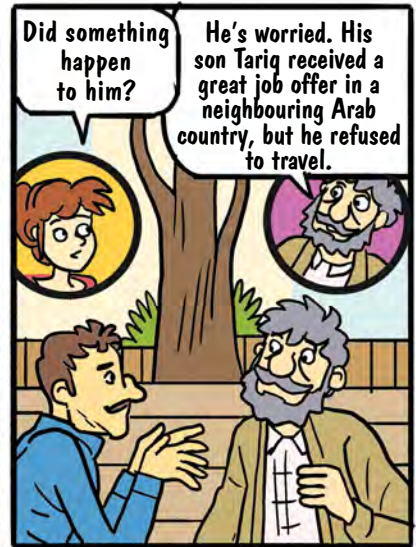
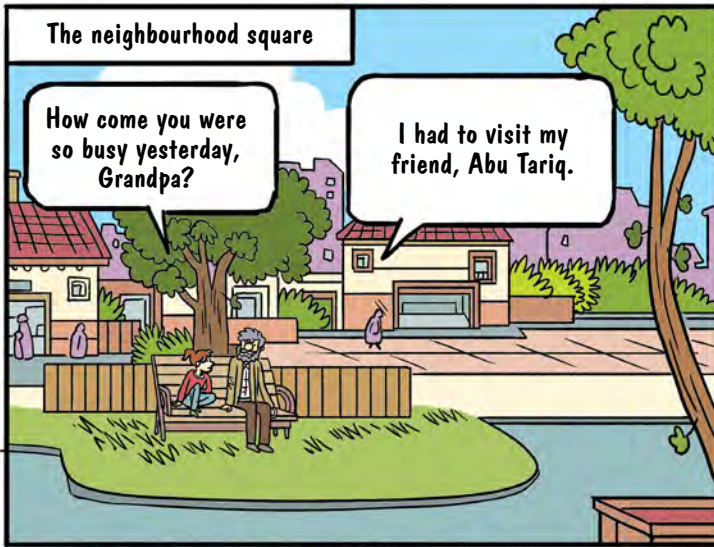
## Story V

# The grass is greener when you water it!











The neighbourhood square

Tariq is spending most of his time in the café with a group of unemployed people!

No way! We never used to see him hanging around during the day.



He's always been committed to his work...

...And creative, too!



He had so many creative ideas and solutions when we were building the solar power plant and pumps for the water treatment plant for the neighbourhood!

I remember! Let's say hello to him.



Hello, friends.



Welcome.

How are you, Tariq? Can we talk privately?



You've been spending a lot of time at the café these days. What's the matter?

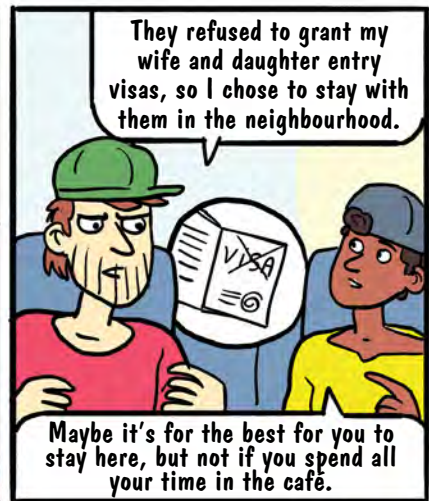






I left my job in one of the neighbourhood companies to work abroad, but I changed my mind about traveling and now I'm unemployed.

Yikes! You had the opportunity to travel and you gave it up. How come?

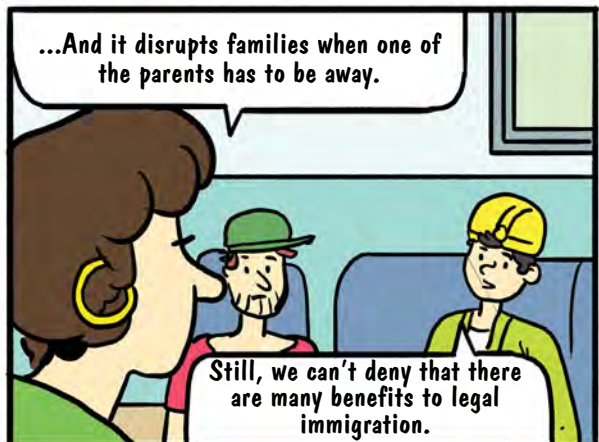


They refused to grant my wife and daughter entry visas, so I chose to stay with them in the neighbourhood.

Maybe it's for the best for you to stay here, but not if you spend all your time in the cafe.



I agree, Salam. It doesn't seem right that young men and women have to migrate for work. It means losing qualified people like Tariq.



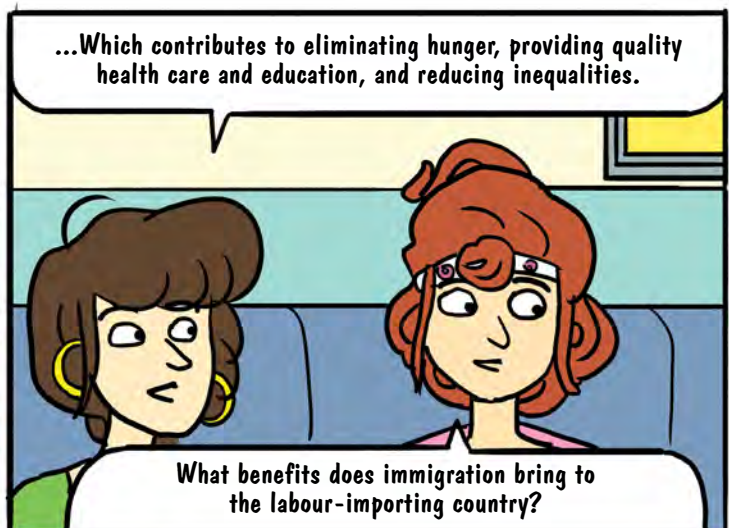
...And it disrupts families when one of the parents has to be away.

Still, we can't deny that there are many benefits to legal immigration.



That's true. Immigration reduces unemployment, and remittances sent by immigrants stimulate economic growth in their home countries.

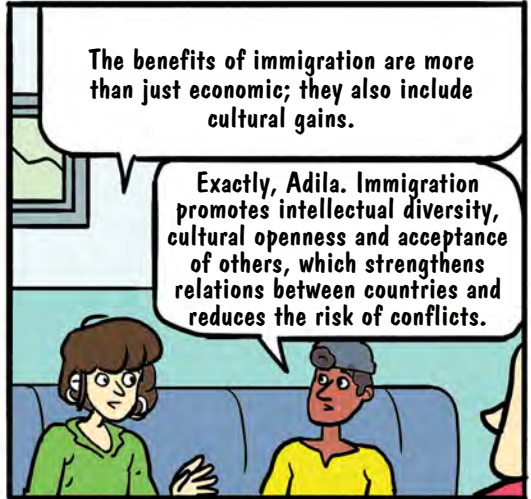
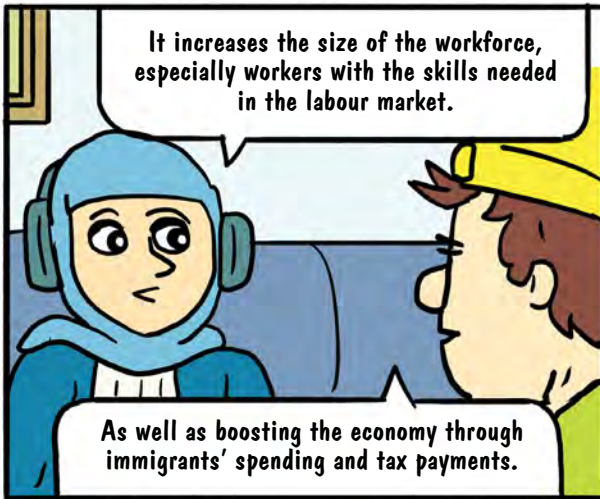
All of this reduces poverty...

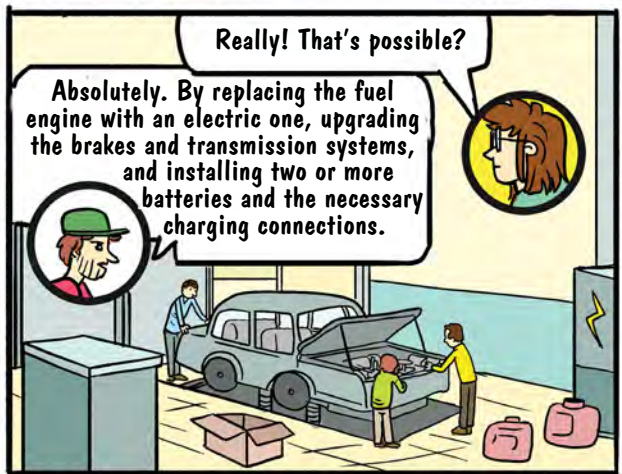
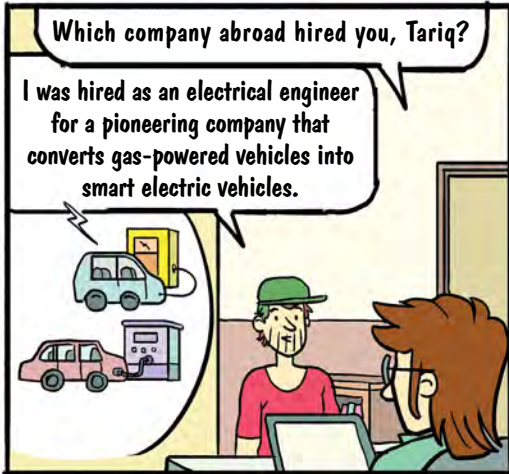


...Which contributes to eliminating hunger, providing quality health care and education, and reducing inequalities.

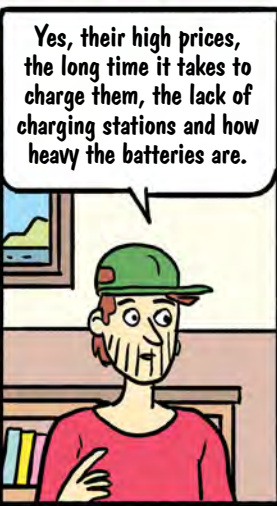
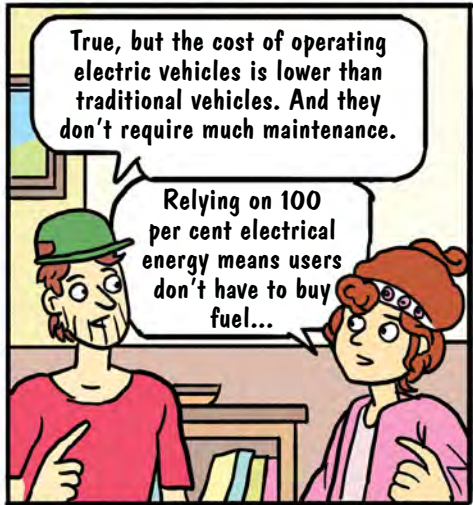
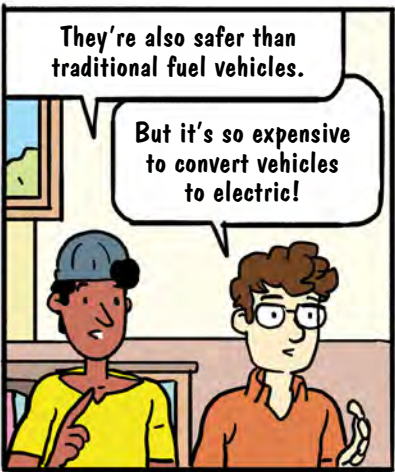
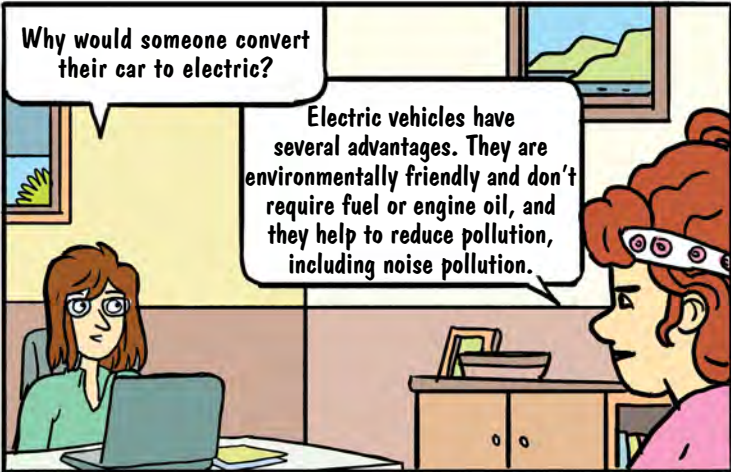
What benefits does immigration bring to the labour-importing country?

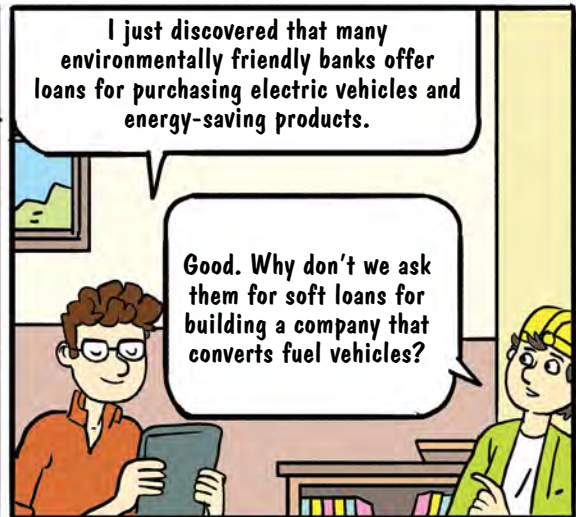
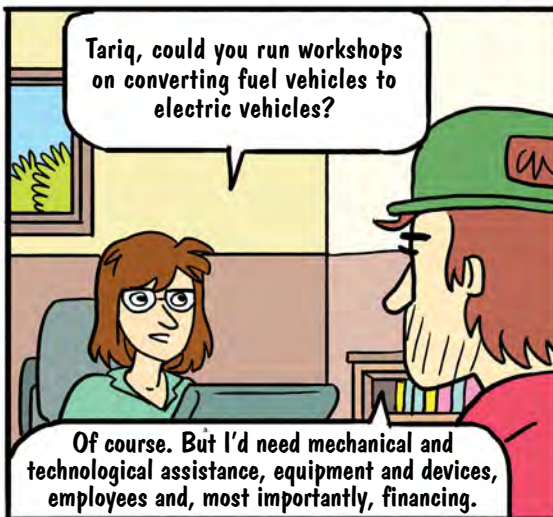
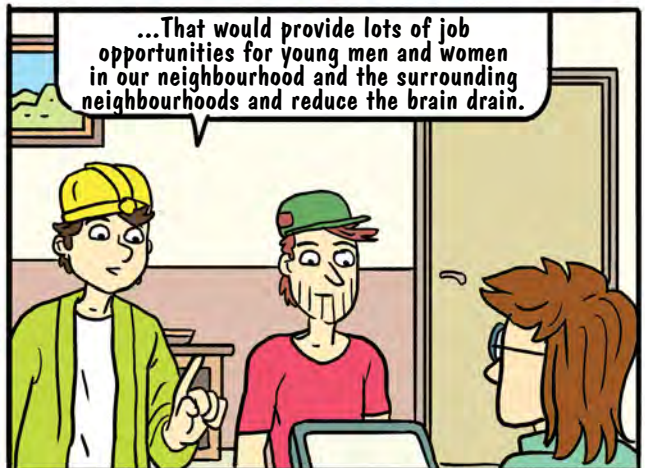
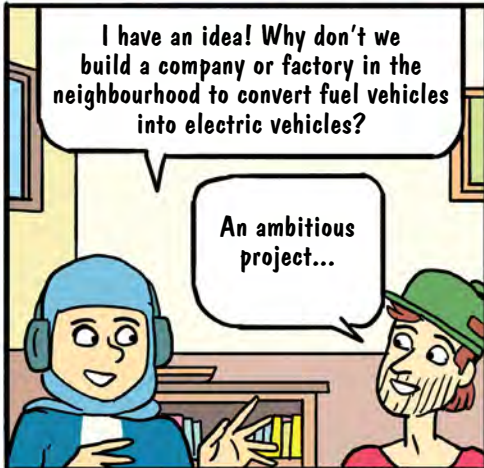
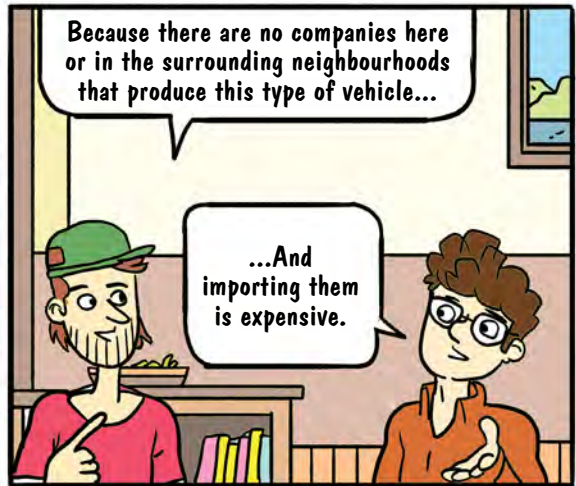
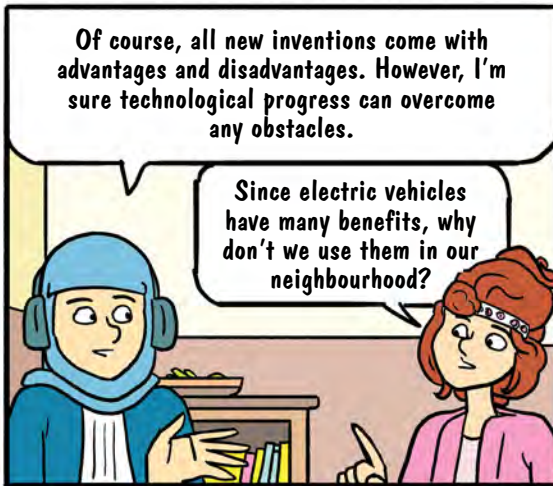




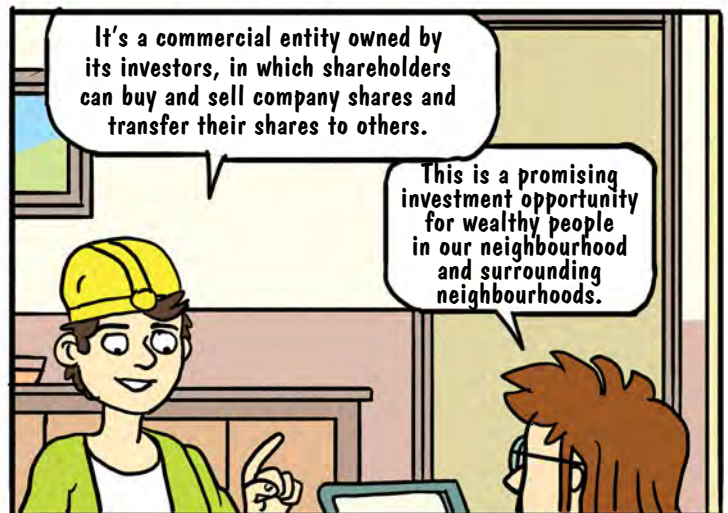
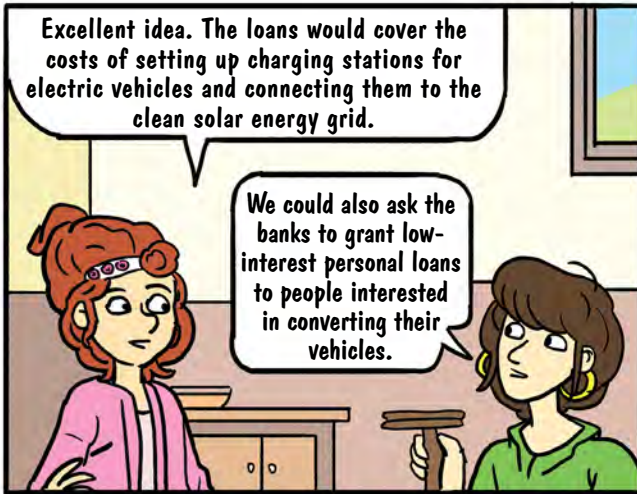


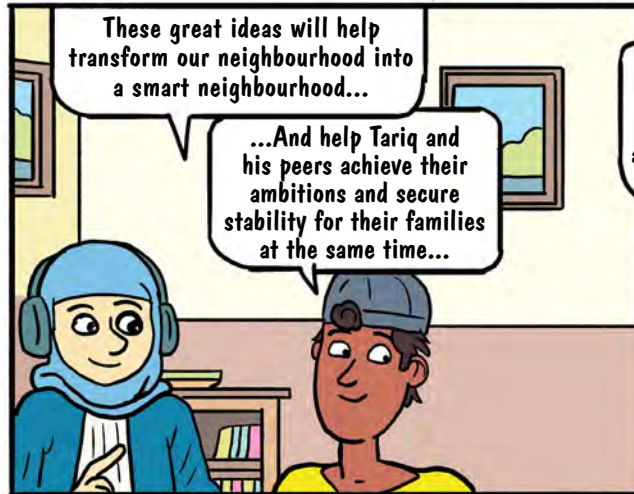
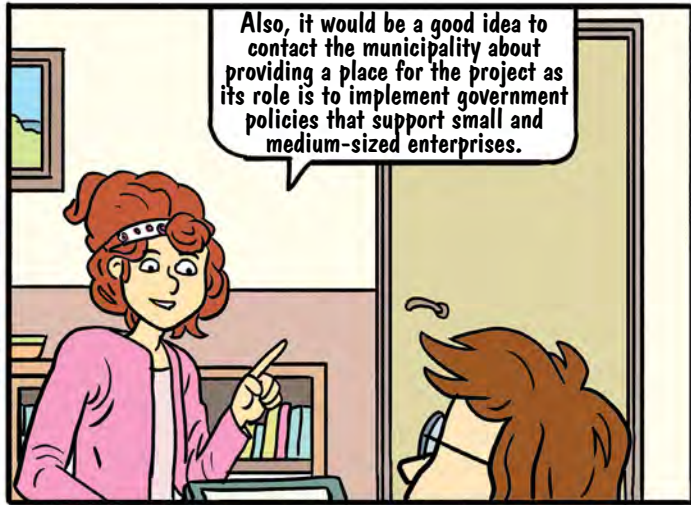




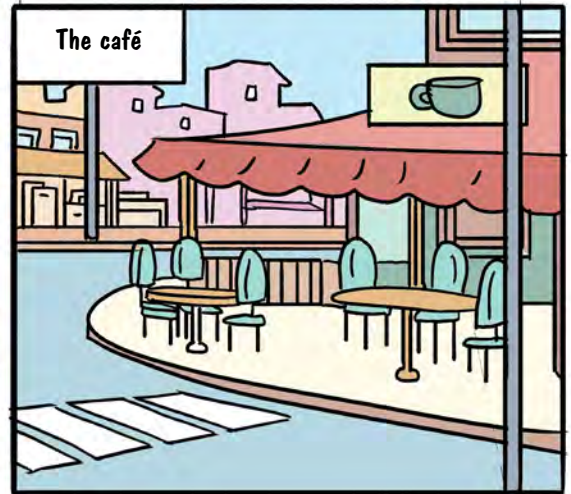
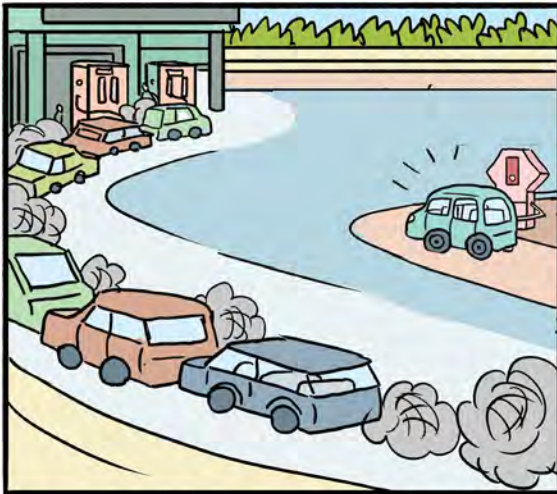
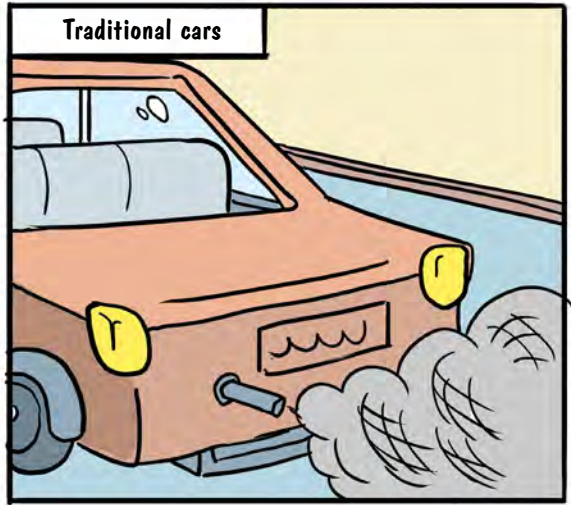




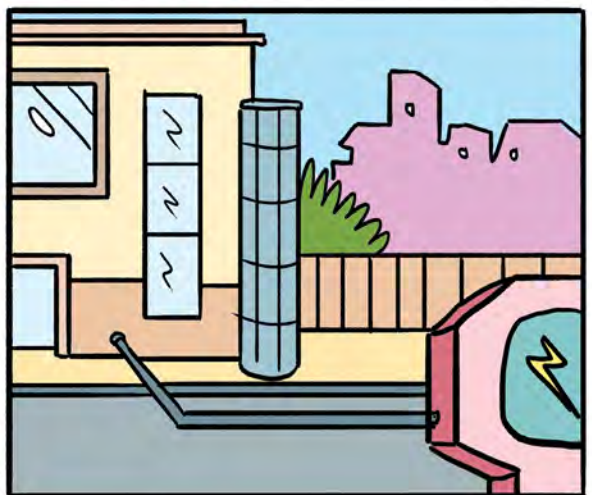
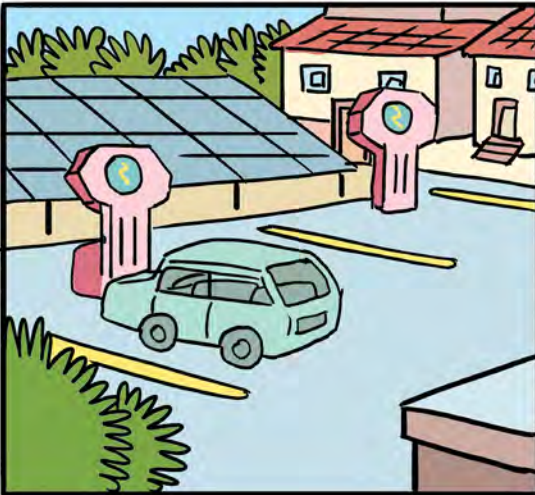
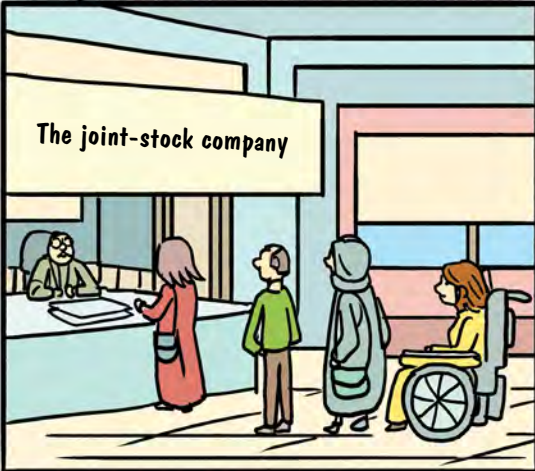




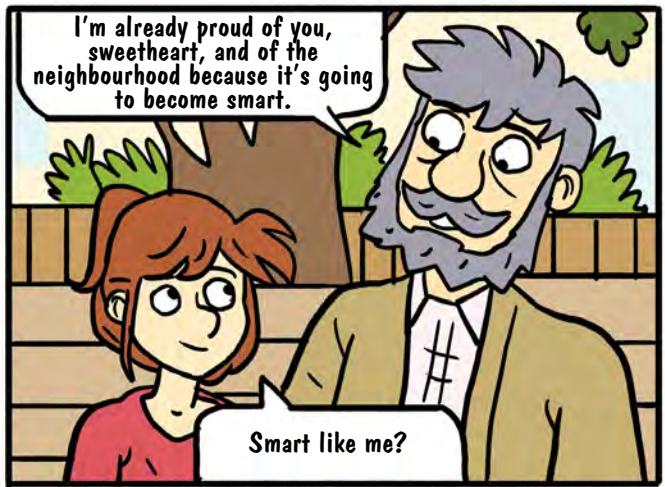
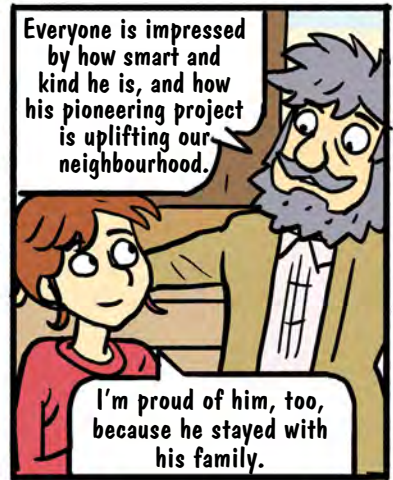












We are ESCWA  
We work with passion  
We bring hope to the region  
We are ESCWA  
We work with passion  
We bring hope to the region  
We desire life  
For every boy  
For every girl  
Our youth  
Are our wealth  
And our concern

We build with determination  
We enrich with knowledge  
Let's join forces  
Let's sow seeds  
And reap the fruits  
Let's join forces  
We are ESCWA  
We bring hope  
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





