



SDG Stories

Engaging young people
with the 2030 Agenda
through storytelling



Shared Prosperity Dignified Life



Background

“ We must empower young people to be the agents of change we need to achieve the SDGs. Their energy and vision are indispensable in building a more sustainable and equitable future for all ”

António Guterres

Young people under the age of 15 made up more than 30 per cent of the population of the Arab region in 2020. Young people between the ages of 15 and 24 were and remain at the forefront of movements calling for social, political and economic change in Arab countries. Now, with multiple crises facing the region, young people are emerging as advocates for sustainability. They are the region's most promising resource!

The SDG Stories project has a simple premise: engage young people now in the discussions they could lead in a few years' time. Gender equality, climate change, pro-poor policies, social justice, healthier cities, food security, among other issues, need to become the “first language” of students in the region. The work has to start early: before young people enter university or the workplace.

To that end, ESCWA published the ESCWA Stories comic book targeting young people between the ages of 8 and 16. The book narrates, in Arabic and English, the adventures of six characters working together to achieve prosperity and development in their neighbourhood that exemplifies the Arab region. Through these stories, ESCWA is translating the sustainable development goals (SDGs) and the values of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development into accessible material students, teachers and families all over the region can work with. In turn, students offer their own interpretations, initiatives and stories, and pass them to their communities, thus contributing to efforts to localize the SDGs.

“ The most powerful person in the world is the storyteller. The storyteller sets the vision, values, and agenda of an entire generation that is to come ”

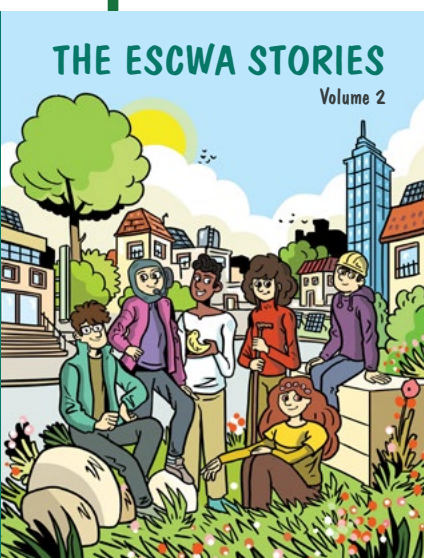
Steve Jobs, 1994



Main objectives

1. Shape future leaders in the region by raising a generation of “global citizens” who apply sustainable development values in everyday life.
2. Empower students to identify sustainability challenges in their communities and engage effectively with local organizations, businesses and decision-makers to advance solutions.

The story so far



On 12 August 2021, ESCWA released volume I of the ESCWA Stories, on the occasion of International Youth Day. In partnership with the Lebanese National Commission for UNESCO, ESCWA worked during the academic year 2021–2022 with 750 students from seven pilot schools in Lebanon that expressed interest in using the book as an educational tool. After providing teachers with a crash course on the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, they developed an action plan with proposed activities inspired by the book. A team from ESCWA and the Lebanese National Commission for UNESCO regularly followed-up with the schools and conducted field visits to support those activities.

Students experienced the stories through civic engagement, language and art classes, and discussed topics related to sustainable development in enjoyable and creative ways. They were passionate about the books: they wrote stories and painted, sang and danced their own interpretations of the SDGs. Some participated in community service activities, inspired by the ESCWA Stories heroes, and others re-typed the book in Braille for their classmates with visual disabilities in schools for students with disabilities.

This work culminated in ESCWA Stories Day, held at the United Nations House in Beirut on 17 June 2022, an event that allowed the young people to engage with decision-makers. Students presented theatrical performances reflecting their understanding of the SDGs and their vision, hopes and aspirations for the future. The event was followed by an art exhibition that showcased the students' paintings, writings and artistic creations, all inspired by the book.

Phase I (2021–2022)

The ESCWA Stories reached out to 750 students - as young as 8 years old - in seven pilot schools in Lebanon, and engaged them through storytelling, conversations, and activities to stimulate their critical thinking about development issues.

Phase II (2022–2023)

After the success of the pilot phase in Lebanon, ESCWA published volume II of the book in September 2022, and expanded the initiative to share its message with 7,000 students in 21 schools Jordan, Kuwait and Lebanon.

Phase III (2023–2024)

The ESCWA Stories reached out to almost 12,000 students in Lebanon, Jordan and Kuwait!



Looking Ahead

- Volume IV is being finalized and will be rolled out by September 2024 in more schools in Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon and other Arab countries. Special focus will be given to public schools, schools in underprivileged areas, and those that work with orphans and students with disabilities.
- The possibilities are huge: ESCWA looks forward to strengthening the community engagement dimension and fostering partnerships for local student-led sustainable initiatives, in addition to exploring innovative ways for engaging young people with decision-makers on the 2030 Agenda.
- Minimal cost for a large impact: on average, the project costs \$10,000 per school.

Links and Material

The ESCWA Stories webpage:

<https://www.unescwa.org/escwa-stories>

ESCWA Stories Comic Book: Volume 1

Arabic: www.unescwa.org/sites/default/files/pubs/pdf/escwa-stories-first-edition-arabic.pdf

English: www.unescwa.org/sites/default/files/pubs/pdf/escwa-stories-first-edition-english.pdf

ESCWA Stories: Volume 1 – Videos in Arabic

Story 1: <https://youtu.be/ZH7xgNbzyeQ>

Story 2: <https://youtu.be/9xNaWnRQaRk>

Story 3: https://youtu.be/IRKLeMdTHmU?list=PLNEC7NhwHQRQ_DkAIUMLbU27jL_CVoPgZ

Story 4: https://youtu.be/6wyaBzot7hc?list=PLNEC7NhwHQRQ_DkAIUMLbU27jL_CVoPgZ

Story 5: <https://youtu.be/mrJzv71pPac>

ESCWA Stories: Volume 1 - Videos in English

Story 1: https://youtu.be/h0n4UX5-Hg4?list=PLNEC7NhwHQRQ_DkAIUMLbU27jL_CVoPgZ

Story 2: https://youtu.be/_jQnQWY0xzE?list=PLNEC7NhwHQRQ_DkAIUMLbU27jL_CVoPgZ

Story 3: https://youtu.be/Z5THinERLE4?list=PLNEC7NhwHQRQ_DkAIUMLbU27jL_CVoPgZ

Story 4: https://youtu.be/fMyXvRLZT7Q?list=PLNEC7NhwHQRQ_DkAIUMLbU27jL_CVoPgZ

Story 5: https://youtu.be/hhNw8Si8fqM?list=PLNEC7NhwHQRQ_DkAIUMLbU27jL_CVoPgZ

ESCWA Stories Comic Book: Volume 2

Arabic: www.unescwa.org/sites/default/files/pubs/pdf/escwa-stories-second-edition-arabic.pdf

English: www.unescwa.org/sites/default/files/pubs/pdf/escwa-stories-second-edition-english.pdf

ESCWA Stories Comic Book: Volume 3

Arabic: <https://www.unescwa.org/sites/default/files/pubs/pdf/escwa-stories-volume-3-arabic.pdf>

English: <https://www.unescwa.org/sites/default/files/pubs/pdf/escwa-stories-third-edition-english.pdf>

