

# Something is happening to our planet and homes

A story about the climate crisis, conflicts and forced displacement.



**Written By Toluwalola Kasali**

**Illustrated By Scribbleline**

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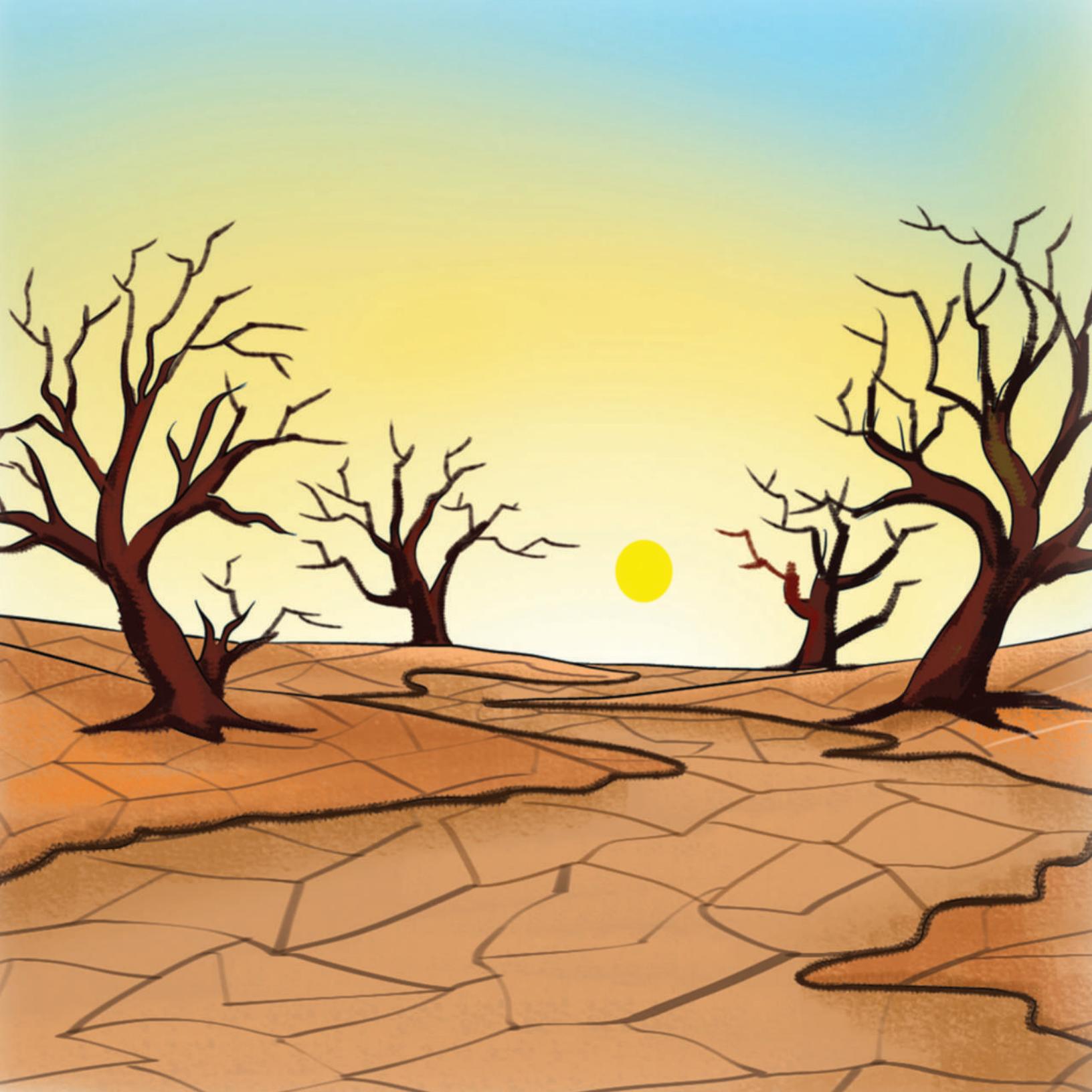
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Visit the author's website at [booksbytoluwalola.wordpress.com](http://booksbytoluwalola.wordpress.com) or  
contact the author by email at [booksbytoluwalola@gmail.com](mailto:booksbytoluwalola@gmail.com).

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No 10c Chris Alli Crescent, 2nd Avenue Estate, Ikoyi, Lagos, Nigeria  
(234) 8089200451  
[booksbytoluwalola@gmail.com](mailto:booksbytoluwalola@gmail.com)  
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# This Book Belongs To

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# Introduction

Climate change is increasing weather-related disasters and affecting people's lives, including young children, all over the world. This book demonstrates to young children the connection between the climate crisis, conflict and forced displacement.

Samuel is grateful when he finally arrives at Liberty with his family after two years of living in camps and host communities. Samuel and his family were forced to flee their home the first time due to conflict. However, when extreme weather events, including wildfires and floods, affected their settlements, they had to leave again in search of safety. They experience the sadness, loss, hunger and vulnerabilities that come with being forcibly displaced and look forward to finding a place they can call home. As they move around, Samuel learns more about the climate crisis from his mum. He looks forward to continuing his education so he can achieve his dream of becoming an astronaut.

This book also includes questions that will help readers think about the experiences of children going through conflict, climate crises and forced displacement.



Hello, my name is Samuel. Follow me on a journey to learn about how the combined effect of conflicts and the climate crisis is affecting my life, home, family and community. This book aims to create awareness and educate children by demonstrating the impact of conflict and climate change on children, women, men, older people, families, displaced communities and host communities.

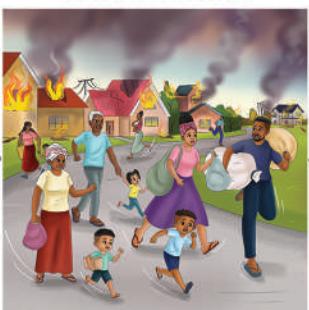
# My Life's Journey

## The beginning



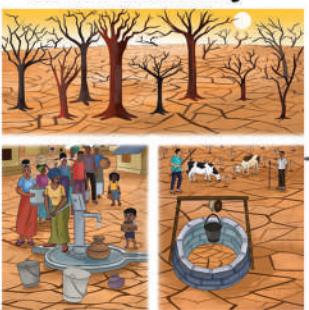
My happy family

## Displaced by armed conflict



Fleeing home

## Drought in host community



Community resource conflict

## Displaced by wildfires



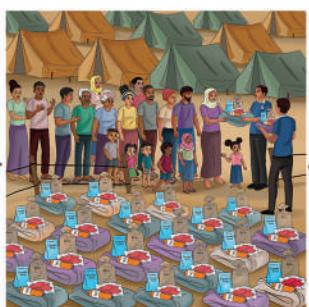
Forced to flee again

## Heavy rain and flood in the camp



Destroyed shelter

## Living on aid



Aid distribution

## Camp for displaced people



Camp registration

## Turned away



Host community conflict

## Taking shelter in a school



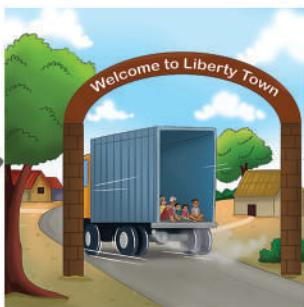
Waiting for help

## Displaced by floods



Forced to flee again

## New host community



Hope

## Raising awareness



Speak up!

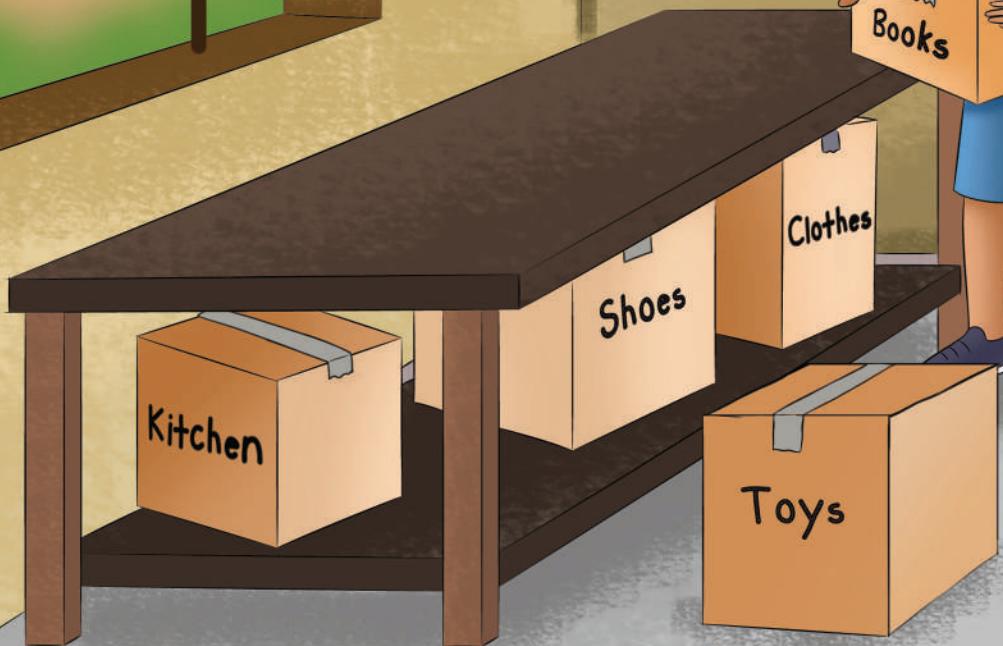
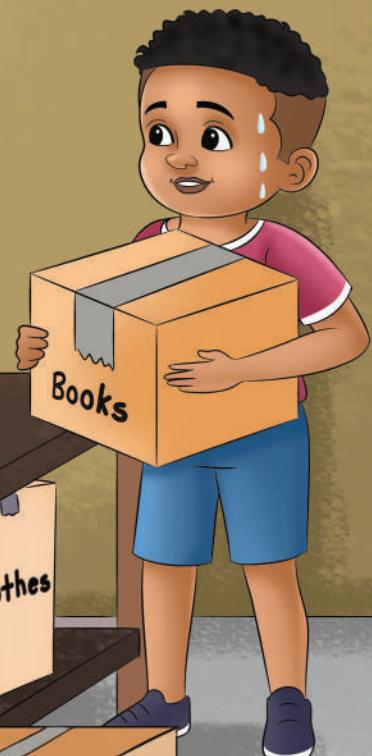
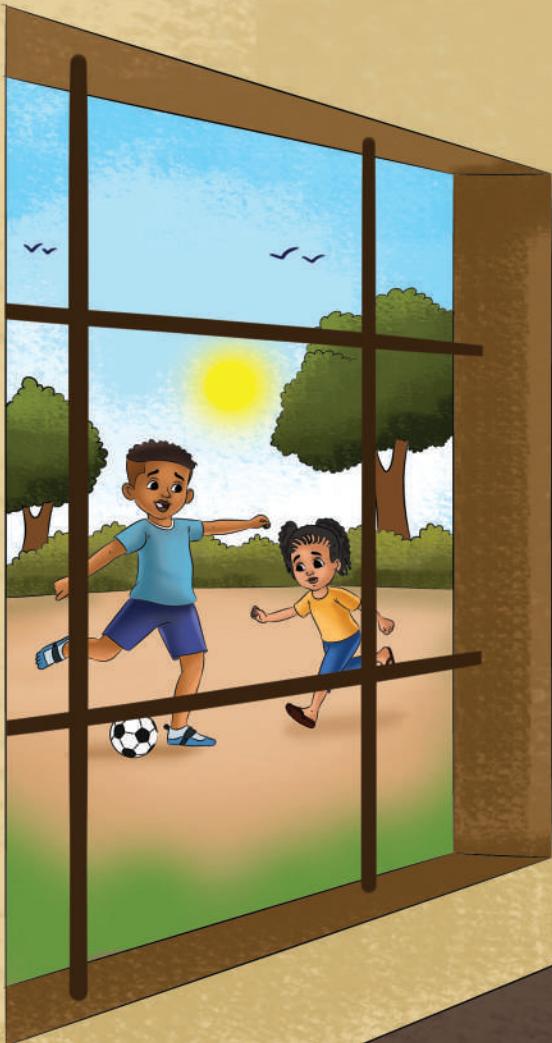
# A place to call home: a new beginning

“I need some water to cool down,” Samuel said. He carried in the last welcome box his family had received upon arriving to a new town called Liberty. It was a sweltering day, and Samuel had been moving boxes as he settled into his new home with his family.

Samuel had moved to Liberty with his grandparents, parents and siblings. This was the **third time** he had moved homes, and he hoped he and his family could stay here much longer. He was happy to finally have a place to call home after being resettled in a new town with his family.

Samuel set the box down on the table and began to feel anxious. He was worried about his parents, who would have to walk a long distance to a farm in the scorching heat so that they could feed their family. He also worried that his grandparents were not getting enough water in their bodies. They needed to stay hydrated in the heatwave. Samuel looked out of the window and also remembered that his younger siblings had been playing football outside the house with no one watching them.

After a few minutes of draining himself with worry, Samuel said, “Well, I better call it a day and get some sleep. I need to be awake bright and early tomorrow for my first day at the new school.” After all, worrying never solved anything, he thought.



# First day back at school

The next day, Samuel arrived to school early. The new school was located close to the country's southern border and had been donated by the community. Samuel and his family had been forced to leave their home at the northern border, which was dealing with conflict and climate-related disasters.

As other children arrived in class, Samuel noticed that not all of them looked like him. Some of the children had been displaced from other towns within the country (like Samuel), while others had been resettled here from other towns and countries across the border as they searched for safety. Liberty Town was known for welcoming everyone.

Samuel was happy to be back in class and learning after being out of school for so long. He still wanted to be an astronaut and hoped to get that opportunity someday.

**Question:** How do you think Samuel felt about being away from school for a long period?



Welcome  
To The  
First Day Of School

Announcements

# Showing empathy

On the second day of school, Samuel noticed a young boy sitting alone in the playground. Samuel walked up to him and asked, “Can I join you, please?”

The young boy nodded his head.

So, Samuel stretched out his right hand and introduced himself with a smile.

“Hi, my name is Samuel. What is your name?”

“My name is Joseph,” the young boy said. “My English is not very good, and I don’t want anyone to find out, so I would like to be by myself.”

Samuel smiled at Joseph knowingly. He remembered how different he had felt at every new school as his family moved around searching for a new home.

He was determined not to let anyone else feel that way.

**Question:** Why do you think it is important to show kindness and empathy towards others?





SCHOOL

EVERYONE IS WELCOME.  
SCHOOL DONATED BY THE  
PEOPLE OF LIBERTY TOWN.

## Making a new friend

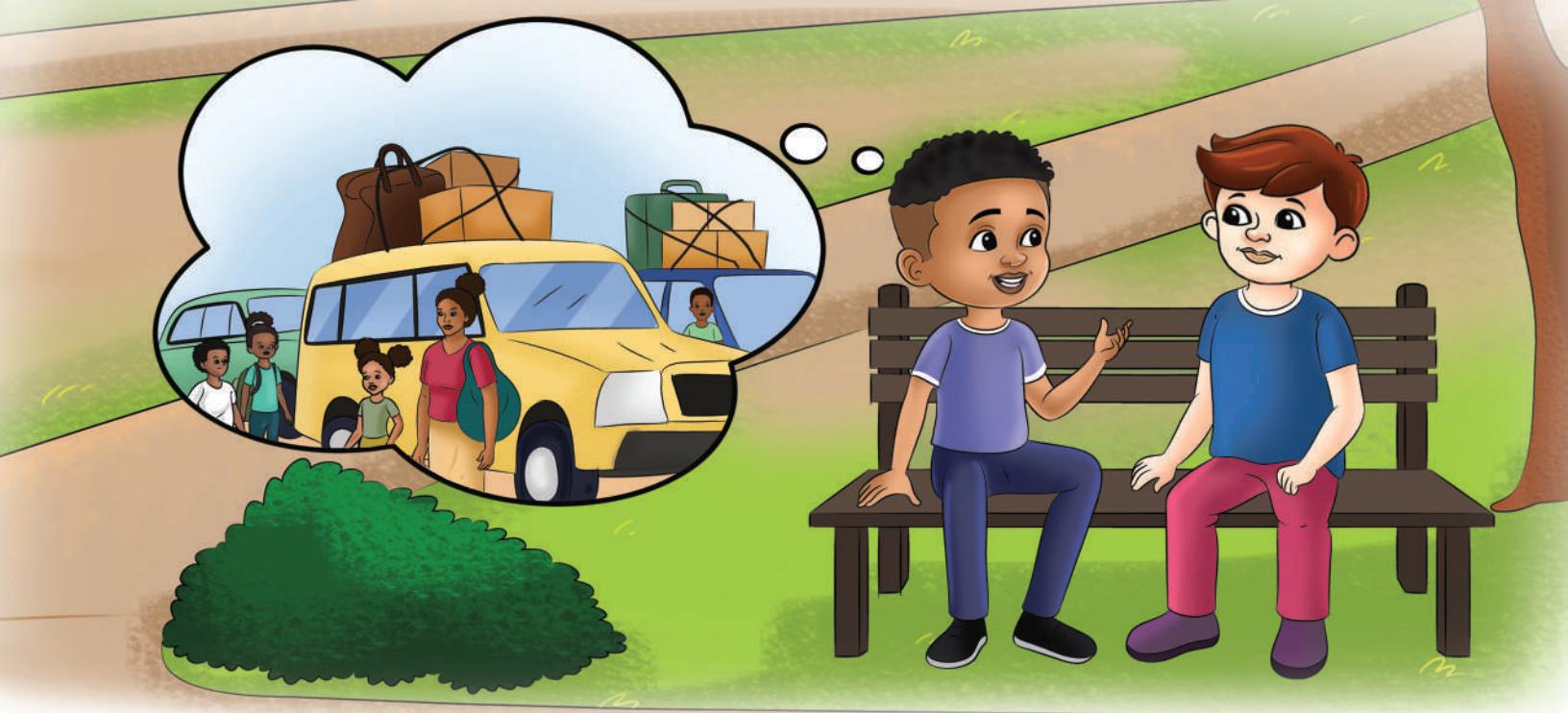
As Samuel sat quietly beside Joseph, his mind drifted off a bit. He remembered sitting at the back of the lorry with his family as they travelled across different towns, looking for a community willing to accept his family.

Samuel saw other children with their families cramped in cars, buses and lorries – their belongings packed up as they tried to leave town.

He closed his eyes and imagined that there might be many more children across the world who had been forced to leave their homes just like him.

Samuel wondered if Joseph had also come from far away. However, he thought it might be better not to ask any probing questions until Joseph was comfortable enough to share.

The school bell rang, and Samuel jolted back to reality. He held Joseph's hand, and they walked back to the classroom together. Samuel made his first friend that day.



# My school project

At the end of the first week, the teacher announced a class project to help the students get to know each other better. The project, called “My Life’s Journey,” would allow every child to make a presentation about their life and share their stories with the class.

The teacher hoped that they might be able to learn about each other. They could learn from each other’s experiences and build understanding and empathy towards each other along the way.

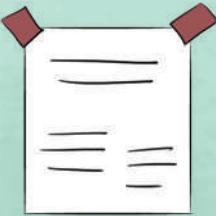
Mindful of the diverse circumstances of the students in her class, the teacher gave them the flexibility to tell their stories in different ways. They could use pencils, pens, crayons, colours, cardboard, paper or computer presentations.

When the teacher asked who wanted to go first, Samuel raised his hands quickly.

“Alright, Samuel,” the teacher said. “We look forward to your class presentation in three weeks.”

Samuel was excited and nervous at the same time. People will finally be able to hear my story, he thought.

Class project:  
My life's journey



## Asking for help

When Samuel got home from school, he immediately ran to his parents and told them about his upcoming presentation. He also told them that he needed money to visit the library in town after school and use its computer. “I want my presentation to be the best,” he said.

His father promised to take an extra job at a construction site nearby to raise enough money to cover the library fees. Samuel had one final request: “Promise that you will help me fill in the gaps with information I don’t have?”

“We promise,” his family responded.



## Putting the story together

So, every evening, Samuel sat with his parents, grandparents and siblings. He listened to stories and took notes with rapt attention so he could fill the gaps in his story.

The story was beginning to come together, and the family started looking forward to this time of story-sharing every evening.

Finally, after a few weeks, Samuel was done. He had a complete presentation about his life's journey.

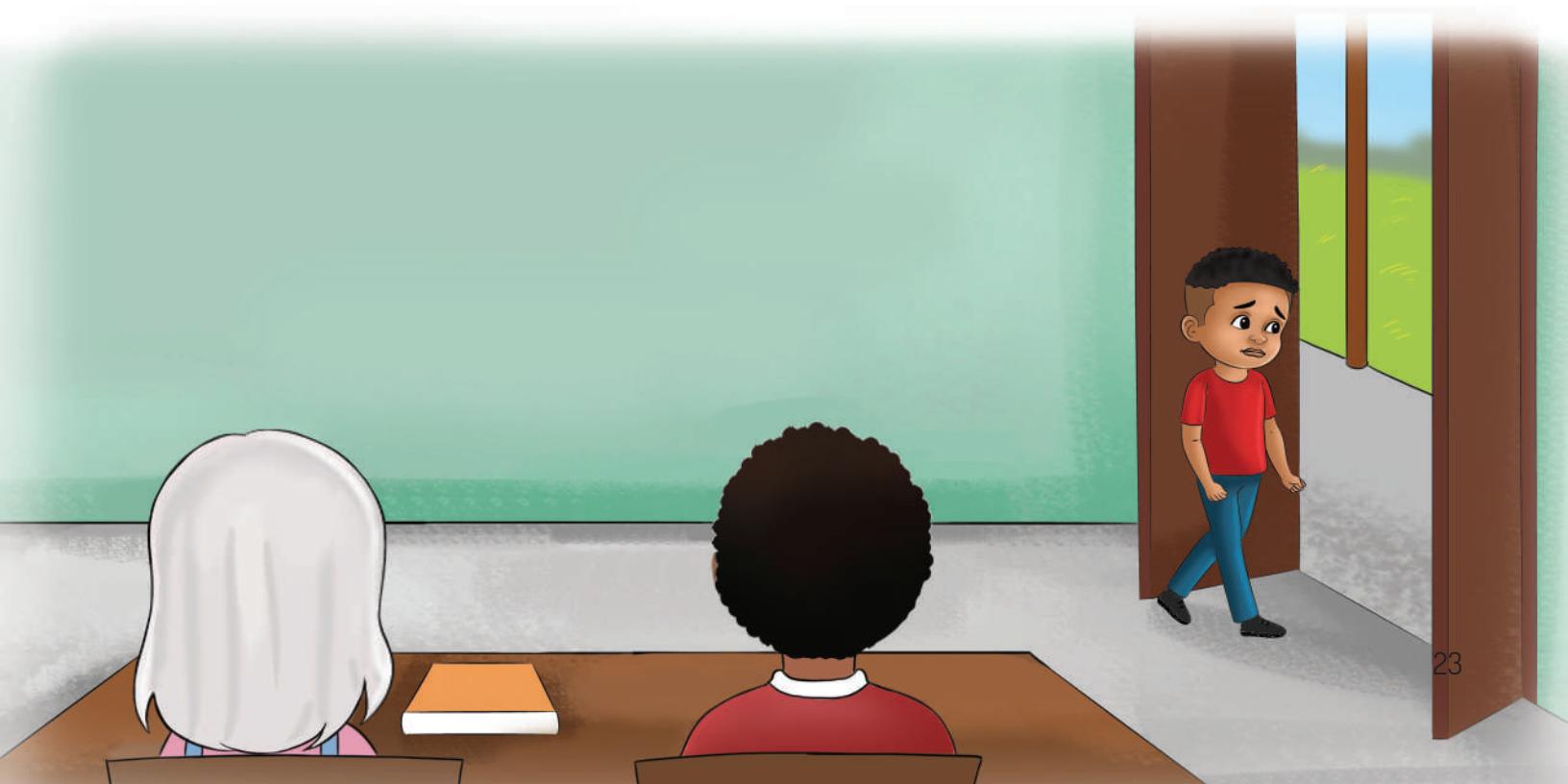


## My only friend stops coming to school

Samuel was so eager to tell Joseph about his completed presentation. He ran into class the next morning and waited for Joseph to arrive. Every time the classroom door opened, Samuel hoped that Joseph would walk in, but he never showed up.

After his last lesson, Samuel walked up to the teacher to ask about Joseph. “I am sorry, Samuel,” the teacher responded. “Joseph cannot continue coming to school because his parents can no longer afford the fees. And now, he has to help his mother with work on the farm.”

Samuel was very sad. He thanked his teacher and left the classroom.



## My affirmations

On the day of his presentation, Samuel looked into the mirror in the school's corridor and repeated his affirmations: "I am not alone", "I am brave", "I am confident", "I am enough" and "I can do this."

His teacher was waiting at the classroom door and gave him a reassuring smile.

Education creates  
hope and opportunities  
for the future.

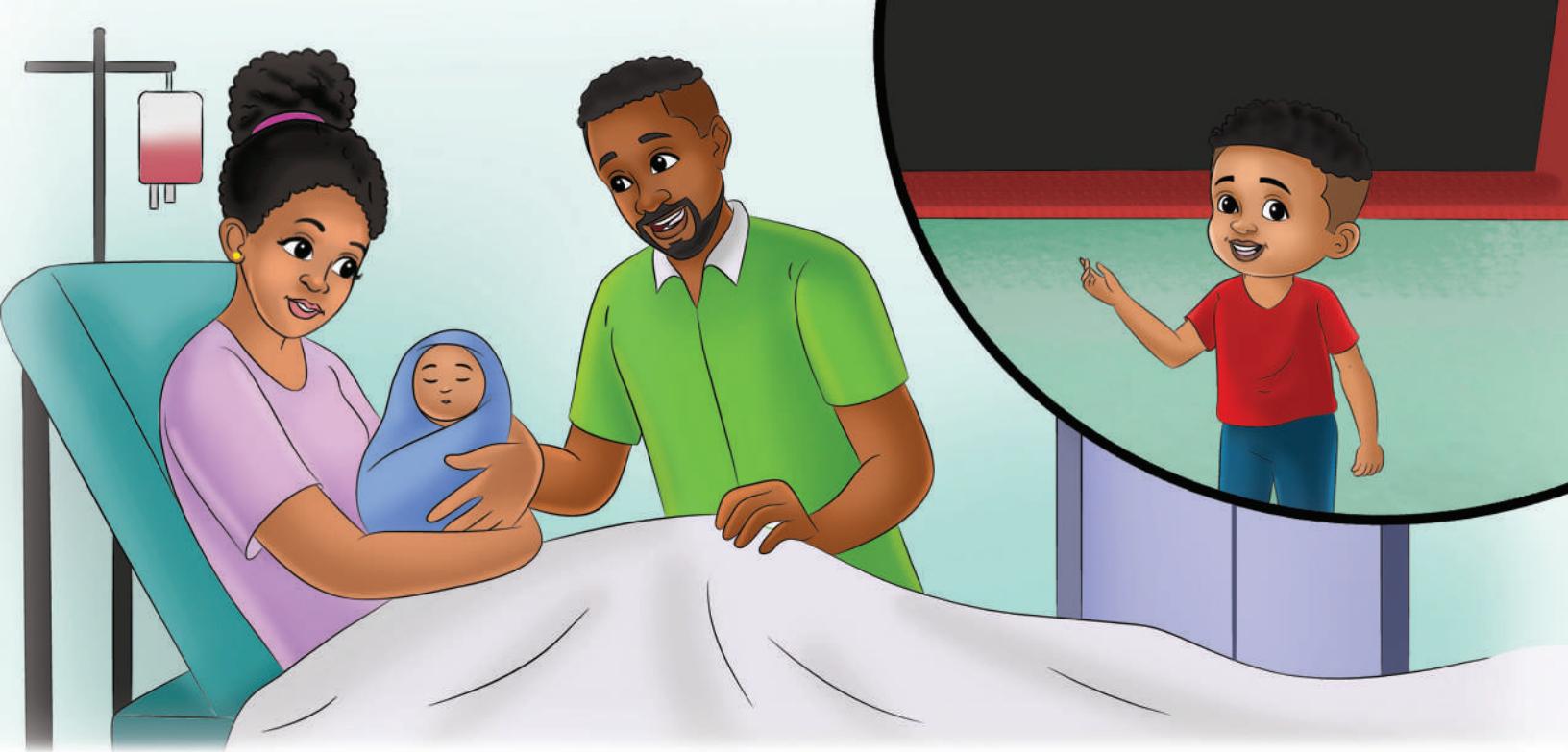


## My life's journey: how it all started

With a broad smile plastered on his face, Samuel walked into his class full of confidence and started his presentation, using sketches he had developed to tell the story.

“My name is Samuel, and I am 10 years old. I was born in a town called Beth. My family was thrilled when they heard my first cry as I came into the world. I was immediately named after my grandfather, who was a teacher at the time, and my parents promised him that I would get a good education (no matter what happened).

“My father was also a teacher, and my mother was a nurse who worked at the hospital to help save lives. We grew up in a comfortable home – a lovely house with a big garden, a dog and many toys. I was happy in school and had lots of friends. Life was very good!



# Displaced by conflict

“On my eighth birthday, life as I knew it changed. I was forced to leave my home with my family in search of a safe place. It was the first of many such experiences.

“That day, as people went about their daily tasks, armed men attacked the town as a result of an ongoing internal conflict. They destroyed homes, farms, property and public infrastructure.

“Everyone was scared and started running in different directions to hide. After about three hours, the armed men left in their convoy. When it was clear that they had left, people began crawling out of their hiding spots, packing up and escaping to safety. Sadly, not all families were reunited.

“As people ran to safety, many families lost their loved ones, valuable items and even their identification documents along the way. Reaching a safe place was all anyone could think about.

“After weeks on the road, living in forests, tents and temporary camps, my family found a host community. The people welcomed us.

**Question:** What do you think are the major causes of conflict in the world today?





# A host community affected by drought and heatwaves

“The host community was in a quiet agricultural town that was not affected by the armed men’s attacks. However, the community had its own problems – the town had been experiencing very low rainfall and intense heatwaves. It had been experiencing water shortages, and this was a problem because the people depended on rain-fed agriculture (farming that relies on rainfall for water to grow crops). Also, the warmer temperatures had been causing water to evaporate faster from the Earth’s surface, drying out the soil and vegetation.

“This led to a prolonged drought (lasting for many months) and caused crops to start failing. After a while, things got worse because the available land that was good for growing crops and grazing livestock had shrunk. The farmers and livestock grazers had to share limited water, pasture and land, which led to frequent fights. The farmers were losing their crops, and the livestock grazers were losing their animals to the prolonged drought.

“The crop failures were so bad that food became very expensive, and people struggled to feed their families. The harvest was poor, and parents were sad to see their children going hungry for days and younger children facing malnourishment.

“This community that had once been peaceful started to experience its own conflicts over the available land and water resources.



## Young children, women and the elderly are vulnerable

“The heatwave did not subside, and the days were getting hotter – with the town recording a new high temperature daily. People started experiencing dehydration and heat exhaustion, especially young children and elderly people.

“The community leaders advised people to remain indoors and stay hydrated as much as possible, but that was not practical. People had to go out to work to feed their families.

“Also, due to water shortages, homes started struggling to get safe access to clean water for drinking, cooking, cleaning and washing. Children missed out on school because they were out trying to find clean water with their parents. Women and children were made to walk long distances in search of clean water, often coming back empty or with contaminated water. This was beginning to affect sanitation and hygiene in the community and increased the risk of diseases such as cholera.

**Question:** How do you think children feel when they miss out on school because they have to walk long distances to search for clean water?

**Question:** We should protect the vulnerable people in our communities, including children, women and the elderly. Do you agree?





## Displaced by wildfires

“Things continued to get worse. The forests and vegetation got drier, and we were warned that wildfires could start more easily and spread faster with rising temperatures.

“One day, we heard over the radio that a wildfire had started. The strong winds had changed the direction of the fire, and it was now spreading fast towards us. The wildfire was burning down trees, farmlands, animals, schools and houses in its path.

“We left with only the clothes on our backs and entered a bus with our neighbours. As we drove, we saw animals caught in the fire in their natural habitat – dehydrated, exhausted and injured.



# Learning about greenhouse gas emissions on the bus ride

“During the bus ride, I looked up at Mum and said, ‘I am scared, Mum. What is happening to our planet?’

“Look, Samuel,’ she said. ‘Our planet, Earth, is a beautiful place made up of the atmosphere, water and land. They help to sustain life for humans, animals and plants.

However, the Earth’s average temperature has been rising higher and faster than is required to maintain life on Earth. This is because of increased greenhouse gases released into the atmosphere, mainly due to human activities.’

“How do you mean, Mum?” I asked.

“We burn fossil fuels like oil, natural gas and coal to power our buildings, factories and industries. We also use them to fuel transportation (including this bus ride) and power appliances used in our homes. When we do this, greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) are released into the atmosphere,’ she responded.

“Is carbon dioxide the only greenhouse gas?” I asked.

“No,’ Mum said. ‘Methane (CH<sub>4</sub>) and nitrous oxide (N<sub>2</sub>O) are also greenhouse gases – and there are others too. However, carbon dioxide currently accounts for a major percentage of greenhouse gas emissions from human activities.’



## Learning about Earth's rising temperature on the bus ride

“So, how does this increase the Earth’s temperature?” I asked.

“Mum was tired but needed to keep me busy on the bus ride while my siblings slept, so she kept answering my questions.

“She then explained that as more and more greenhouse gases are emitted into the atmosphere, they trap some of the heat from the sunlight that enters our atmosphere. This causes the average temperature of the Earth’s surface to rise.

“She further explained that this process of global warming is a major contributor to climate change – the change in average weather patterns over a long period – not just a few days or weeks.



## Learning more about the climate crisis on the bus ride

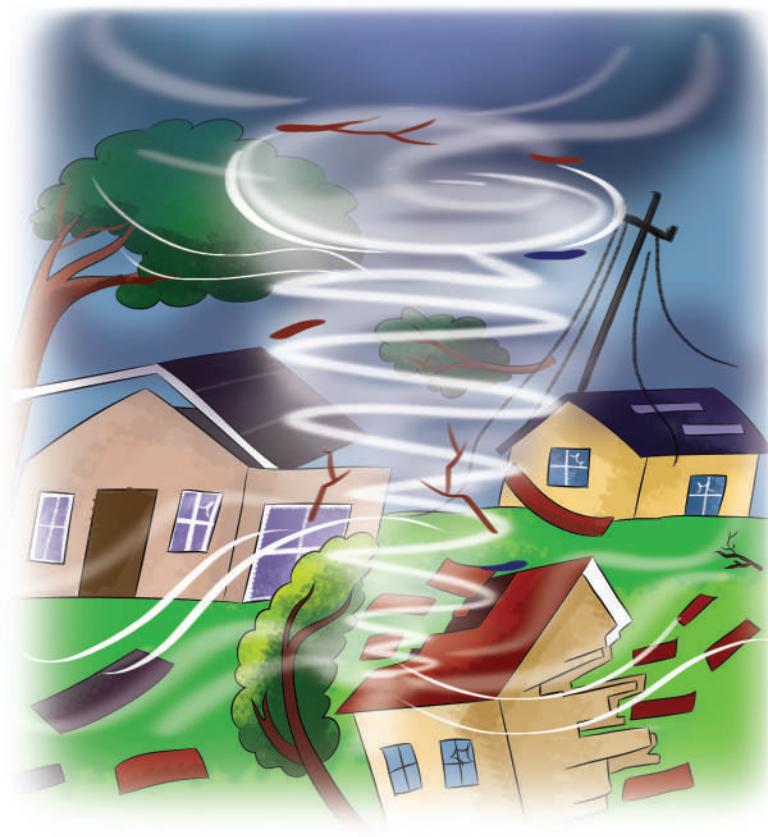
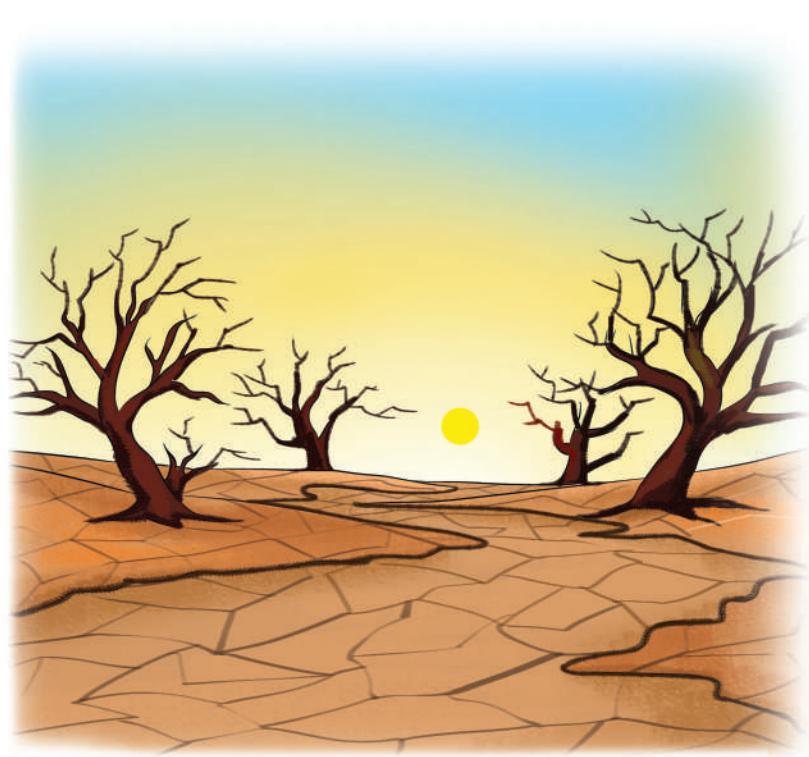
“Wow, Mum!” I exclaimed. ‘Do we have a crisis on our hands?’

“Yes, Samuel, we do have a climate crisis. As you have experienced over the past few months, rising temperatures are increasing the frequency, intensity and duration of extreme weather events such as heat waves, wildfires, droughts, hurricanes and floods.

“When these extreme weather events happen, they cause harm to humans, plants, crops, animals and marine life living on the planet. The impact of these extreme weather events includes destruction of lives, property, livelihood, natural habitats and homes. It forces people like us to flee to safety and be displaced from the place we call home – many times over.”

**Question:** In what ways have you experienced the effects of extreme weather events?





## One last question on the bus ride

“I have one more question, Mum. Are humans the only ones responsible for this climate change?” I asked.

“No,” she answered. ‘Climate change happens naturally. But it is happening faster and more intensely because human activities are increasing the emission of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere above what is required to maintain life on Earth. This is what is leading to the crisis we are facing.’



## The community refuses to let us stay

“When the bus finally arrived at a nearby town, the people there would not let us get off the bus. By this time, all the children on the bus were thirsty and very hungry. They cried to their parents, who were helpless. People in the town spoke to the driver, explaining that their water and land resources were limited and already stretched – they could not take in more people.

“Our parents pleaded with them to help us, but they said no. They said to us, ‘We must also ensure that our families and children survive with our limited resources. If we let you in, then we put our own families at risk.’

“The driver advised us to leave to avoid confrontations. So the bus turned away and headed towards the border, hoping to find a camp for forcibly displaced people.

“After driving for another four hours, we came across a camp.



# Registering at a camp for displaced people

“When we arrived, we needed to get registered – but we encountered an issue that would come up many times over as we tried to access essential services and rebuild our lives.

We had no forms of identification because they had been destroyed with our homes.

Like many others, we were left with only the clothes on our backs.

“Hearing this, the camp officials captured our registration details for our stay in the camp.

They stated that we might need to get proper identification later on in order to access any available education, health and social assistance services.

“Available tents, batchers (structures built by people in the camp) and other makeshift shelters were assigned to arriving families – one to each family, regardless of how many people were in a family. The shelters were not perfect. They were on the bare ground and made of iron sheets, wood, plastic, old sacks and any other sturdy material people could find. Ours was dark and had poor ventilation. However, we were glad to be away from the road and in a safe place.

“This was the second time we had been forced to seek shelter and safety. But we were just glad to have all arrived safely. So, we fell asleep – tightly packed together but grateful for each other’s warmth.

**Question:** Forcibly displaced people have a right to safety, shelter, food, access to services and security of life. Do you agree?





## Realising that we cannot depend on aid sustainably

“We started settling into the camp gradually and waited for the biweekly aid distribution. Sometimes it came, and other times, it did not come. We had to ration food and resources. My parents knew that this was no way to live, but we had no choice.

“My dad said to me that if only he could get some equipment, start-up capital and support for a farming business, he would go into farming. Then he could take care of himself and his family.

“He had met people in the camp who had been there for more than five years and still waited for aid distributions. They were dependent on aid.

“My parents knew that was not sustainable and did not want to live that way.



# Heavy rainfall and flooding in the camp

“After a few weeks in the camp, it started raining heavily. The rain continued for a few days and the tents took in water, as they were built on the ground. My family and I spent the day pouring water out of the tent and the nearby makeshift shelter. All our belongings were wet. We stood outside the tent and earnestly hoped for the rain to stop.

“Reports of flooding in the surrounding camp area had been received due to the heavier-than-usual rain. ‘Why is the rain so heavy, Mum?’ I asked.

“Mum answered by explaining that heatwaves are causing more water to be evaporated from water bodies, including oceans and lakes. The warmer atmosphere is able to hold more moisture. When this happens, the increased moisture produces more rain (heavy downpours), which can possibly lead to flooding in some areas.

**Question:** Have you ever experienced the impact of a severe climate event or heard about it in the news? How did it affect the people impacted?





## Learning that rise in sea levels leads to flooding

“What else leads to flooding?” I asked.

“Due to the rising temperature in the atmosphere, the excess heat is absorbed by the ocean’s surface,” Mum replied. ‘As the water heats up, its volume expands, which contributes to the rise in sea levels. Warmer water temperatures can also lead to storms or more intense hurricanes, which can cause storm surges (high winds pushing rising sea and waves towards the shore) and flooding, especially for those living in small island countries and low-lying coastal areas.



# Learning that warmer water temperatures affect the marine ecosystem

“Warmer water temperatures can also affect the marine ecosystem by leading to coral bleaching, for example.”

“Wait. What is coral bleaching, Mum?”

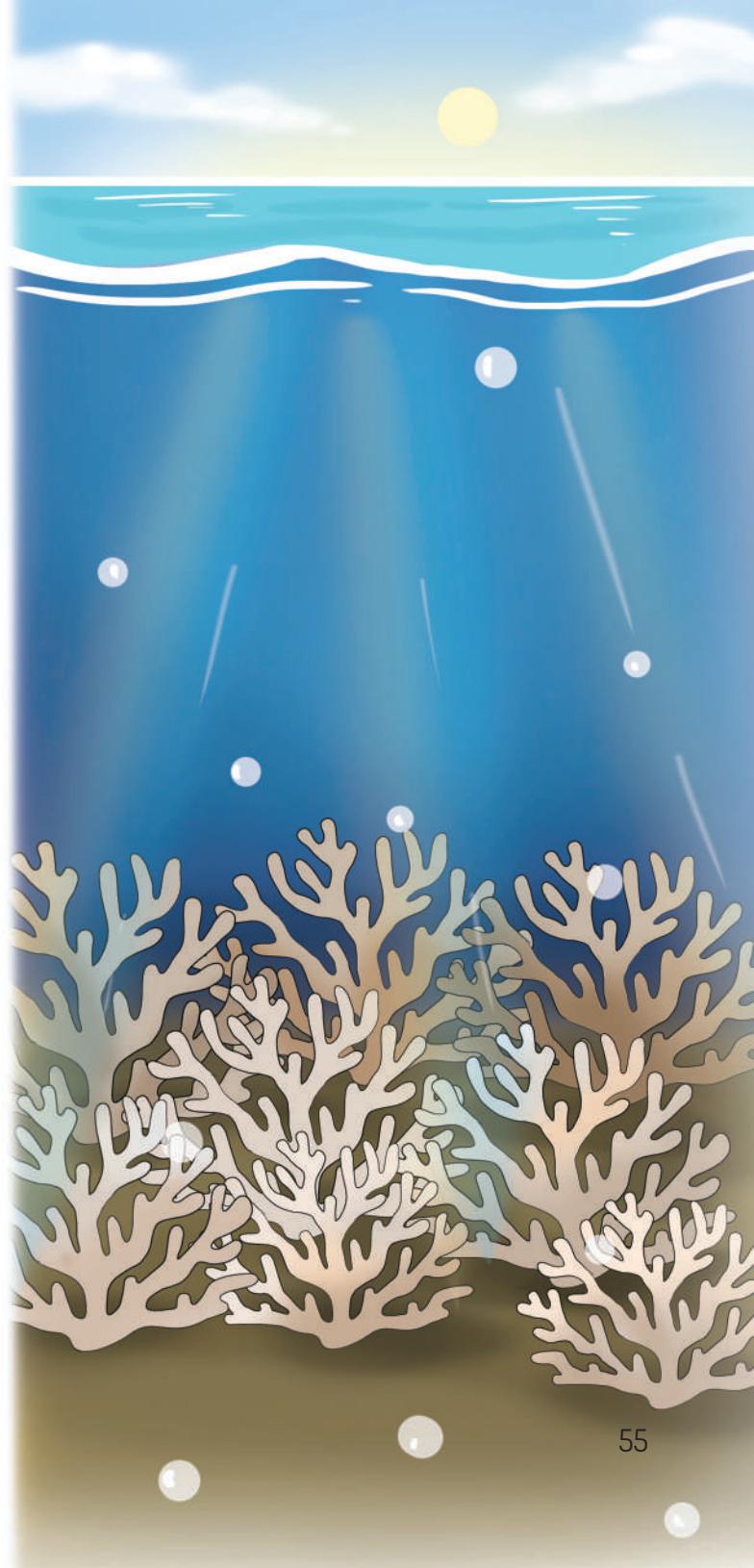
“So, algae are responsible for the corals’ vibrant colour. However, the rise in the ocean’s temperatures stresses the corals and causes them to expel the algae living within their tissue. This causes the corals to lose their colour and eventually turn white.”

“Oh wow!” I exclaimed.

“Mum quickly added that in this bleached state, corals are more vulnerable to disease and death. This is because they have lost their source of food and nutrients and can become weak if conditions don’t improve.”

**Question:** What do you think might happen to bleached corals if the conditions in the water don’t improve?





## Learning that warmer temperatures are causing glaciers to melt

“By the way,’ Mum added, ‘in some other regions, rising temperatures are causing glaciers to melt more rapidly. The water from the melted ice adds extra water into the ocean and can cause sea levels to rise, which can lead to flooding.

“When flooding happens, it destroys and washes away people, buildings, farmlands, roads and bridges, power and telecommunication infrastructure, animals and homes.’



## Standing together drenched in the rain

“The rain continued to pour down heavily, and our camp became flooded too. Tents, makeshift shelters and batchers were washed away, and people’s property was destroyed. The camp had lost electricity too.

“We also got news that the floods had destroyed large hectares of arable farmland, which was going to affect food production, people’s livelihoods, income and food security.

“Left with no choice, we stood there, drenched in the rain, and cried together as a family.



## Taking shelter in a school

“When we arrived here, we were hoping to get some respite, but that would not be the case. The repeated cycle of conflict and climate crisis had caused us to be displaced for a long period of time. We were tired of being strong and needed a break.

“We had nowhere to go and tried to take refuge in nearby schools which had been shut down because of the floods. We stayed there for a few weeks before we found a truck to drive us to safety.



## Finding a way out through fallen power and telecommunication lines

“The truck tried to go southwards, but the driver was told that the bridge connecting the two towns had been destroyed by the flood. So we could not go any further south on that route. Many of the other routes were also closed. Heading back up North was not an option because neighbouring towns and countries were also experiencing ongoing armed conflict. Luckily, the driver knew a different but longer route.

“Power lines had fallen on the side of the road, and telecoms infrastructure had been destroyed. This also blocked some parts of the new route. It was going to be a very long and bumpy ride.

**Question:** How do you think damaged infrastructure like roads, power lines and telecommunications lines affect children?



# World leaders need our help

“So,’ I asked my mum, ‘if the planet is a good place, why are so many bad things happening?’

“Mum said, ‘Our planet Earth is a beautiful place with its atmosphere, land and water. The planet helps to support and maintain life for humans, plants and animals. But you and I have a responsibility to protect our planet. We must keep planet Earth safe and livable for ourselves today and for future generations.’

“Mum stared into space and continued. ‘Leaders around the world are also trying to play their part by working to achieve 17 global goals called the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. Because of what we have experienced over the past months, we know that these issues are interconnected and that everyone has to play their part.

“As a young child, you have had to witness the impact of conflict and the climate crisis on poverty (SDG 1), hunger (SDG 2), access to water and sanitation (SDG 6), health and well-being (SDG 3), education (SDG 4), work (SDG 8), communities (SDG 11) and peace (SDG 16).

“These are all part of what world leaders are trying to solve. But they cannot do it alone. They need all our help,’ Mum emphasised.

**Question:** What will you tell a world leader today about the impact of climate change and conflict on children? What more should world leaders be doing to help children?





What can we do?  
Take action, raise awareness, speak up!

# We have a role to play

“So, how can we play our part, Mum?” I asked. ‘How can we continue to make Earth a livable planet?’

“We can play our part and contribute to a healthy planet by taking action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to the climate crisis. We can also take actions to reduce the impact of climate change or reduce our vulnerability by ensuring that our buildings, infrastructure, technologies and activities can adapt to climate change events.

“So, here are some simple and practical activities we can do to reduce emissions:

“**Save energy at home.** We can do this by turning off the lights when we leave a room, switching to energy-efficient light-bulbs and managing the use of energy-consuming appliances. We can also use renewable energy sources like solar and wind to power our homes.

“**Change our mode of transportation.** We can save energy by walking or biking to school when it is safe to do so. We can also carpool with our friends and neighbours or take the school bus instead of driving individual cars.

“**Plant trees.** Trees can help to remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere through photosynthesis and also release oxygen, which is good for the planet.

“**Conserve water.** We can conserve water by not leaving the tap running. We should turn off the tap when we are done.

“**Reduce, reuse and recycle.** Reduce the use of paper, plastics and other materials that are difficult to dispose of. **Reuse items** including reusable water bottles, cups and eco-bags and **recycle** paper, glass, plastic, metal and other recyclable materials.

“We can also be part of the solution by ensuring that our homes, schools, play areas, buildings, roads, farm inputs and communities are able to adapt to the impact of climate change.

“We can also speak up about climate change and get others to join in – neighbours, friends, family and leaders.’



## Arriving at our new home in Liberty Town

“We finally arrived at our destination after a very long ride. Everyone was tired and grateful when we arrived here and saw the board which read ‘Welcome to Liberty Town’. I am thankful that this beautiful community has given us a chance to resettle and rebuild our lives.

# Welcome to Liberty Town



## We are leaders and should speak up

“I am telling this story because we are the future and the planet is our home. We have a responsibility to keep it safe and livable for us and future generations. We are also leaders and agents of change – so, let’s educate ourselves and speak up!

“Finally, in everything that we do, we must try not to leave anyone behind in our discussions and solutions.

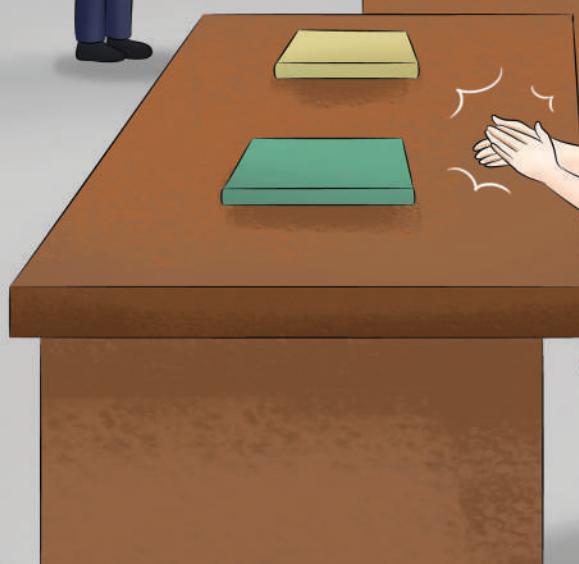
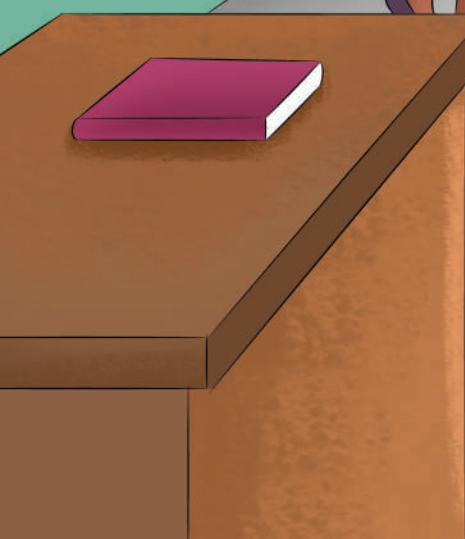
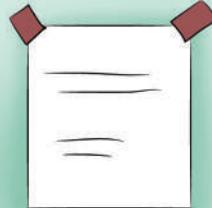
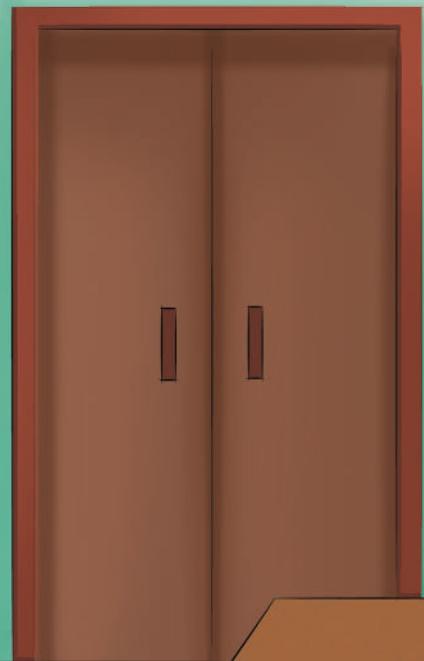
“This is the end of my presentation. Thank you.”

The class stood up and gave Samuel a standing ovation.

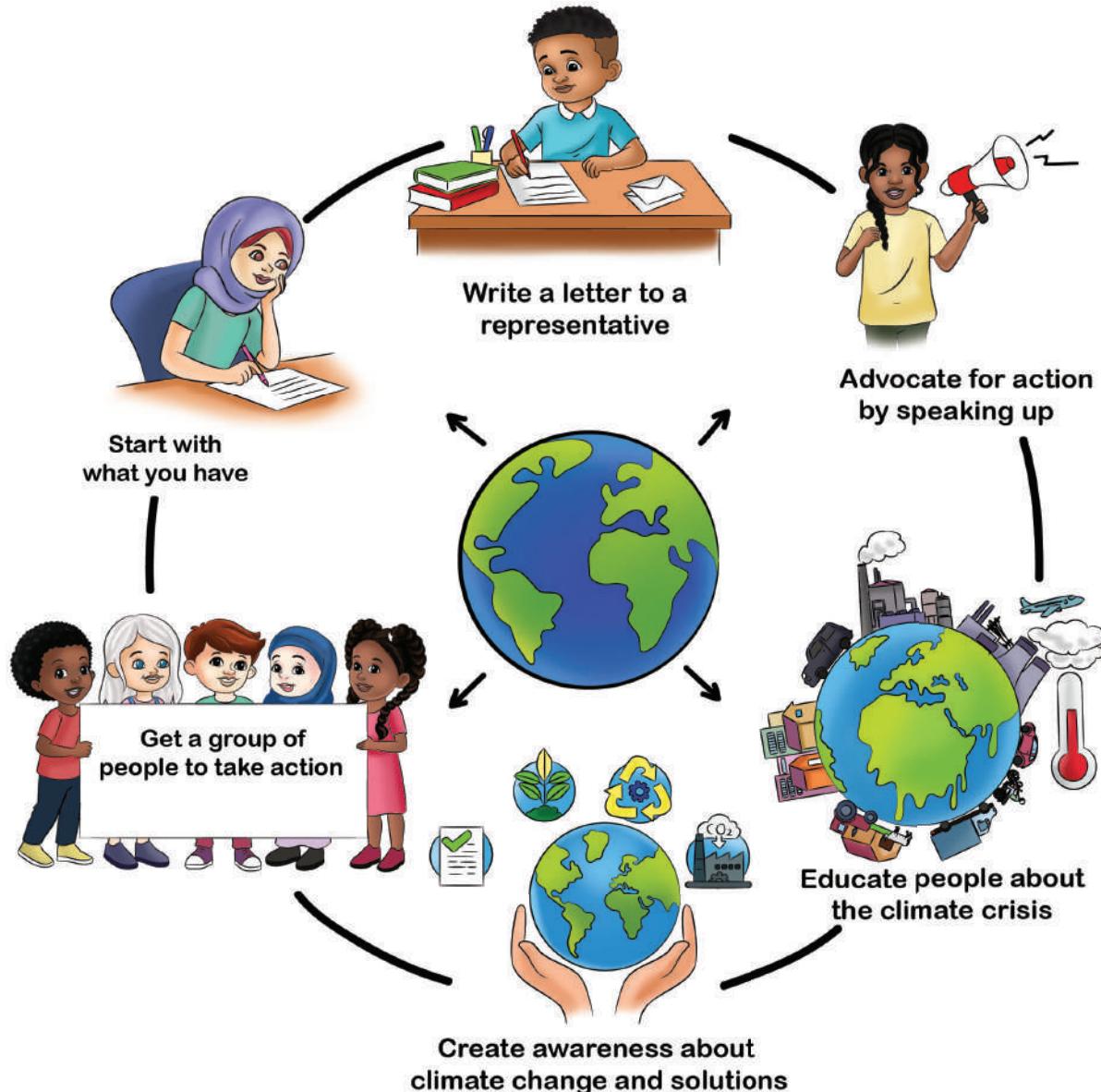
**Question:** What behaviours can help me on my journey as a leader who wants to contribute to addressing the climate crisis?



Class project:  
My life's journey  
THE END



# What can I do to make a difference?



# Telling interlinked stories



## About the Author

**Toluwalola Kasali** is a multiple award-winning author, advocate, professional and director of an award-winning documentary.

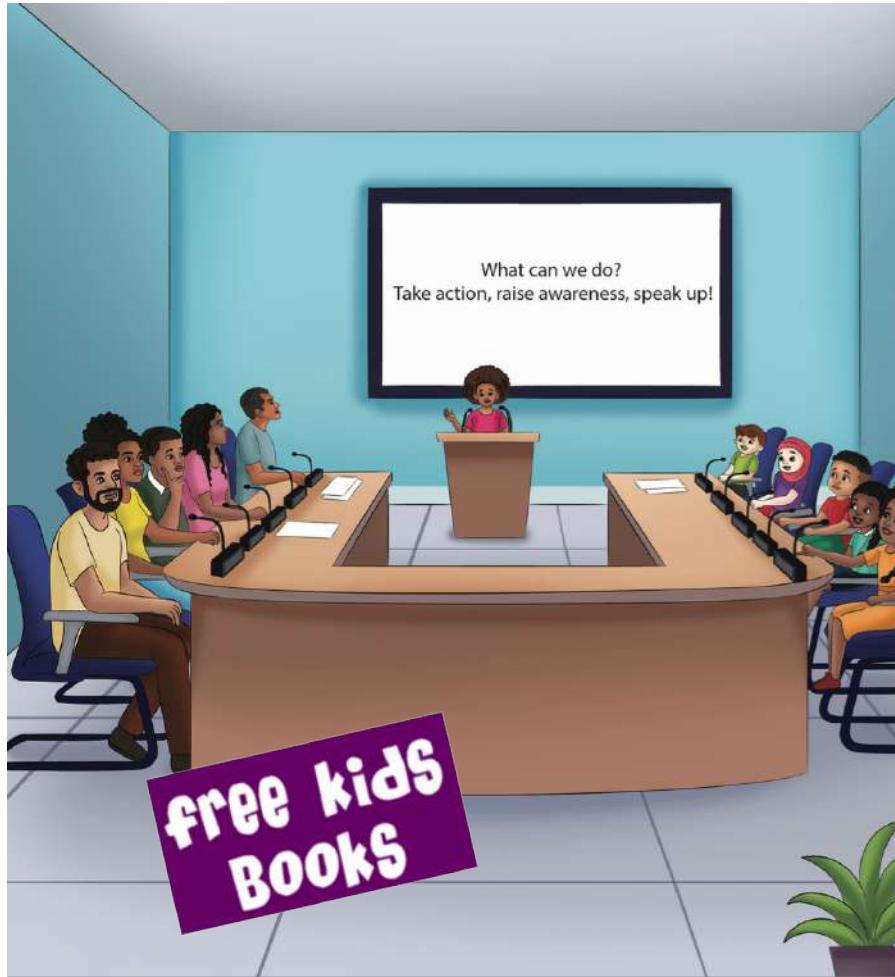
She hopes to make an impact in the lives  
of children, one book at a time.



Photo by Rani Tahouf

We are agents of change,  
so let's educate ourselves and speak up!





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