



STORIES IN COLOURS

Children Tell Stories Of Climate Change

Transformative Storytelling for Environmental
Awareness and Community Healing



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Transformative Storytelling for Environmental Awareness and Community Healing:

A Methodology for Engaging Children through Creative Narratives: Developed under the Civic Horizons Program, led by the Human Security Collective in partnership with Peace of Art International and in collaboration with community actors from Fakiha and Ain.

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INTRODUCTION

After the Israeli bombs stopped falling on Lebanon, killing civilians and dismantling Lebanese society, five local civil society actors in Ain and Fakiha implemented the Hikayatouna creative program, with support from Peace of Art and Human Security Collective. Nineteen children developed the story ‘Whispers of the Emerald Woods’, about climate change and war. Additionally, eight teachers were capacitated to replicate such a process in their classrooms. But “*Hikayatouna*”—meaning “Our Story” in Arabic was far from being a creative learning experience only; it is a participatory, community-rooted methodology that uses storytelling as a tool for healing, empowerment and transformation. Hikayatouna falls under the ‘Stories in Colours’ initiative which was implemented in Tunisia, Libya, Iraq and Lebanon under the Civic Horizons consortium. Designed to engage children in areas affected by marginalization, conflict and environmental insecurity, it responds to a growing need for local communities to participate in defining climate issues as well as the need for holistic approaches to security, emotionally safe, and imaginative spaces where young people can articulate their realities and dream of new futures.

It is work in progress and there is still much to learn, but in this handbook, Peace of Art and Human Security Collective share the methodology as rolled out in Lebanon. This handbook is both a practical guide and an invitation. It is designed for facilitators, educators, youth workers, and community leaders who wish to engage children in creative storytelling processes that foster emotional healing, civic agency, and environmental awareness. It provides a step-by-step methodology based on real-world implementation, including detailed session plans, adapted activities, and facilitation tips. Whether you are a teacher integrating storytelling into your science class, a scout leader working with displaced youth, or a civil society actor leading workshops in post-crisis areas, this handbook offers flexible tools to adapt to your specific context. It encourages you to not only replicate the process, but to co-create new stories with your community, rooted in local realities and dreams. The handbook is not meant to be prescriptive, but rather a living methodology, one that grows with each group of children, each facilitator, and each story told. We hope that it sparks creative action in many other communities, and that its principles can inspire new models of healing, learning, and environmental imagination.

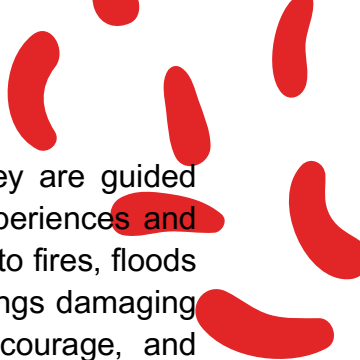
What is “Stories in Colours”?

‘Stories in Colours’ is a child-focused, story-driven initiative that explores climate change through the eyes of children. It started as an exploration of decolonization, oral storytelling traditions and climate change in the MENA region and culminated in an emerging methodology at the intersection of civic education, environmental awareness and psychosocial support.

Climate change is altering lives globally and especially in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. Therefore it is essential that the people whose lives are being altered participate in defining and addressing climate issues. Across the MENA countries, tainted by conflict, instability, failing states, corruption, etc concerns about climate issues are shared but also very contextual. In order to contextualize these issues and ensure communities take part in defining and addressing climate change as it affects them, we used storytelling. Storytelling is a powerful anti-colonial praxis, that gives the power to envision, define and reimagine. And so, ‘Stories in Colours’ was adapted to each of the four communities where it was implemented. The output were four unique stories that reflected local concerns and experiences and enabled children to reclaim their voices.

The initiative worked with children in vulnerable communities who often carry unspoken experiences of trauma, fear, and uncertainty, but also carry immense imagination, resilience, and hope. In post-crisis contexts especially, where children often face both tangible and emotional dislocation, the initiative placed narrative creation at the heart of learning and healing.






The initiative was tailored for children between the ages of 8 and 15. They are guided through a process of co-creating illustrated stories that reflect their lived experiences and aspirations. These narratives often begin rooted in their realities—forests lost to fires, floods washing away homes, animals disappearing from familiar landscapes, bombings damaging ecosystems—and gradually evolve into collective visions of restoration, courage, and community. The children in Ain and Fakiha in Lebanon, were coming out of the trauma of the war, displacement, and uncertainty. Yet within the storytelling sessions, they emerged as inventors of fantastical worlds and courageous heroes—characters that battled machines, roamed magical forests, or saved nature from extinction. These were not escapist tales; they were grounded in personal truth, reflecting the real emotional landscapes of the children's lives.

The process includes more than writing. It involves games, drawing, dialogue, character creation, and collaborative decision-making led by the children. Along the way, children develop not only literacy and artistic skills, but also empathy, self-confidence, and an emerging sense of agency. Teachers and local facilitators are trained alongside children to ensure continuity and integration of the approach into schools and community centers, making "Stories in Colours" a sustainable practice.

Sustainability is a core value to "Stories in Colours". That's why the methodology includes a dedicated phase for teacher and facilitator engagement, ensuring that the impact extends beyond the initial workshops. Following the children's sessions in Ain and Fakiha, a focused training workshop was held with a group of eight local educators. These teachers were not simply trained in how to deliver the sessions—they were engaged as co-designers of how the methodology could fit into their educational contexts.

During the training, educators explored how storytelling could be integrated across subjects—from using stories to teach science and geography to exploring ethics, empathy, and community responsibility. They also discussed how the storytelling approach could be adapted to different age groups and learning needs.

"Stories in Colours" is more than a one-time intervention. It is a sustainable practice that can be embedded within local education systems adopting the power of collective storytelling.



Reflections & Outcomes

We observed the impact of "Stories in Colours": it was multidimensional.

At the individual level, children found a space to express themselves in ways rarely available in traditional settings. Many participants shared feelings they had never before articulated, using the safety of fictional characters and stories to name their fears, dreams, and observations.

On a civic level, children began to understand the interconnectedness between human actions, environmental change, and social responsibility. Through storytelling, they internalized basic principles of environmental justice and began to see themselves as participants in larger systems, capable of making a difference.

Emotionally, the sessions provided a space for healing and reconnection. Shared laughter, drawing, role-play, and storytelling helped rebuild trust, connection, and a sense of agency among participants and facilitators alike, with this initiative coming after a period of war that the children have lived through.

Importantly, the project prioritized community leadership and adaptability. The story was shaped with a reflection on local needs, languages, and cultural identity, ensuring authenticity and relevance throughout.

A key success of the initiative was the collaborative creation of a children's book based on the story developed during the sessions.





Methodology Overview

At its core, the "Stories in Colours" methodology is shaped by four guiding principles that inform its design and delivery: experiential learning, community reflection, creative literacy and emotional engagement whereby the facilitator plays a central role.

Experiential learning is the methodology's foundational approach. Children do not simply receive information—they interact with it. Climate change and environmental justice are introduced through games, sensory activities, drawing exercises, and problem-solving scenarios. These experiences invite children to connect abstract issues with their personal and local realities.

As the children's stories develop, they are encouraged to explore how individual actions relate to broader systems—how pollution affects a whole village, or how a flood changes not just homes but relationships.

Creative literacy—narrative, artistic, and performative—gives children the skills to not only tell stories but also shape them, diving into the characters and the worlds in-depth. They learn how to build characters, create worlds, plot conflicts, resolve tension, and visualize their ideas through drawing and dialogue. These skills are transferable beyond the workshop: into classrooms, friendships, and homes.

Equally important is emotional engagement. "Stories in Colours" creates emotionally safe spaces where children can express fear, sadness, curiosity, or hope without fear of judgment. Many participants come from environments where emotional expression is constrained by trauma or social expectations. The sessions allow them to speak through metaphors, characters, and stories—giving shape to feelings that are often difficult to articulate directly. The role of the facilitator is detrimental to the creation of such a safe space. He/ she can do so by:

Firstly, facilitating sessions and discussions in an inclusive way:

- Guiding principles are defined by the facilitator and the children at the beginning of the first encounter. The children are given some time and space to discuss in a constructive way when there are varying views on what principles should guide them.
- Facilitator applies appreciative listening, honest communication, remains neutral in the discussions to allow all to feel they can express whatever opinion they have, ensures all are heard, etc.
- Facilitator applies deep democracy and is attuned to the group dynamics. If tensions arise in the group, the facilitator decides on how to deal with them, including by considering what those involved think they need. As a result, the facilitator could decide to open up the space for an honest and open discussion about the issue.
- The children are valued as the experts they are. Their views are no lesser, or less important than any other voice in the room.

Secondly, modeling values:

- The principles, skills and methods, the children are trained on in order to use, are also practiced by the facilitator. Participants pick up on the divergence between “what is preached” and “how the preacher acts”. It becomes a mere performance and affects the credibility of the facilitator and the content of the session. And hence also, negatively the impact of the training.
- The facilitator is a role model for inclusive decision making in the group
- The facilitator is open and honest towards the group. The facilitator is not afraid to be vulnerable in front of the group, reflects on what he/she does and learns from what he/she could have done differently with the group.



A Session-by-Session Framework

The "Stories in Colours" initiative is built across eight core sessions with children, followed by a concluding session with educators. Each session is designed to build upon the previous one, guiding participants through a progressive creative journey that ends with the production of a co-authored story.

The first session lays the groundwork by introducing the topic of climate change and environmental action. Rather than beginning with statistics or abstract theory, the session uses interactive games and multimedia storytelling to evoke emotional connection. Children engage in exercises such as drawing their environment before and after climate disruption, sharing how changes affect their families, pets, or favorite places.

The second session introduces the fundamentals of storytelling. Through fun, collaborative exercises like “pass-the-story,” children begin to understand narrative structure, the role of protagonists and antagonists, and how to build a world through words and images. They create characters that reflect both personal traits and imagined abilities—often combining human and animal qualities to explore identity and power. These creations are led step by step with guiding questions that help the children think deeply about their created worlds and characters.

In the third and fourth sessions, children develop the world and conflict of their collective story. Activities such as “draw your world” encourage them to map out fictional communities facing environmental challenges. These sessions also include brainstorming about the central problem their characters must face—whether a flood, drought, or disappearing forest—and begin to outline how the story will unfold.

Sessions five through eight are dedicated to co-writing and illustrating the story. Small groups work on different sections, rotating roles as writers, illustrators, and editors. The process is dynamic and democratic: children vote on major plot decisions, share feedback, and practice collaborative storytelling. Dialogue exercises allow them to voice their characters and test emotional tone, humor, and tension. Children sketch scenes, and add creative dialogues to their characters’ journeys. The result is a beautiful, messy, imaginative, and deeply personal story that reflects the hopes and fears of its young creators.

The trainers then collect all these creations, and put them together into the story book, building the wording and the structure of the story with the help of online and AI tools.

Session 1: Understanding Climate Change

Objective: Build a foundation of climate change awareness and spark curiosity.

Icebreaker Game (15 mins)

Game: "Eco-Charades"

Each child takes turns mimicking an environmental action (e.g., planting a tree, recycling, melting ice, strong winds). The rest guess.

Purpose: Break the ice and introduce environmental concepts playfully.

Story Seeds (30 mins)

Show a short video or interactive presentation on climate change tailored to their age group.

Focus on relatable issues like animals losing their homes or extreme weather.

Facilitate a discussion:

1. What did you learn?
2. How would you feel if this happened in your town?

Creative Brainstorming (15 mins)

Distribute large sheets of paper and markers. Ask the kids to draw or write a scene that shows the effects of climate change.

Group Share: Let everyone explain their drawings.

Outcome

Kids have a basic understanding of climate change and emotional engagement.

Session 2: Introducing Storytelling

Objective: Teach storytelling basics and develop characters.

Warm-Up Game (10 mins)

Game: "Pass the Story"

Kids sit in a circle. One starts a sentence, and the next adds to it. Continue until everyone contributes.

Story Structure Introduction (20 mins)

Briefly explain the elements of a story (beginning, middle, end; hero, problem, resolution).

Use examples from known animation movies like Frozen (themes of nature and responsibility).

Character Creation (30 mins)

Activity: "Build-a-Character"

Give each group of 2-3 kids a worksheet with prompts:

1. Name your character.
2. What makes them special?

3. What do they care about?
4. What's their biggest fear or challenge?

Let each group present their character.

Outcome

Kids understand storytelling basics and create characters for their story.

Session 3: Building the World

Objective: Develop the story's setting and conflict.

Warm-Up Game (10 mins)

Game: "Climate Detective"

Kids explore a room where you've set up "clues" (e.g., dried leaves, pictures of a flooded street). Discuss how these items could fit into a story.

World-Building (30 mins)

Activity: "Draw Your World"

Give each group a large sheet of paper to draw their story's world. Prompt them to think about:

1. Is it a forest, ocean, or city?
2. What's happening to the environment?
3. What kind of animals or people live there?

Add a "problem" to the world, like rising sea levels or deforestation.

Conflict Brainstorming (20 mins)

Discuss in groups: What's the big challenge your characters will face?

Share ideas and decide on one main problem.

Outcome

A vivid world and central conflict are developed.

Session 4: Plot Development

Objective: Create the story arc and outline.

Warm-Up Game (10 mins)

Game: “Conflict Cards”

Prepare index cards with potential challenges (e.g., a flood, a villain polluting the river). Kids pick one and brainstorm how their characters could solve it.

Plot Mapping (40 mins)

Use a large chart to create a “story mountain” with the kids:

1. Beginning: Introduce the characters and setting.
2. Rising Action: What happens when the problem starts?
3. Climax: The most intense part of the story.
4. Falling Action: How do they solve the problem?
5. End: What’s life like afterward?

Kids take turns filling in ideas for each section.

Dialogue Practice (10 mins)

Activity: Role-play conversations between characters.

Outcome

A complete story outline with a clear structure.

Sessions 5 to 8: Writing the Story

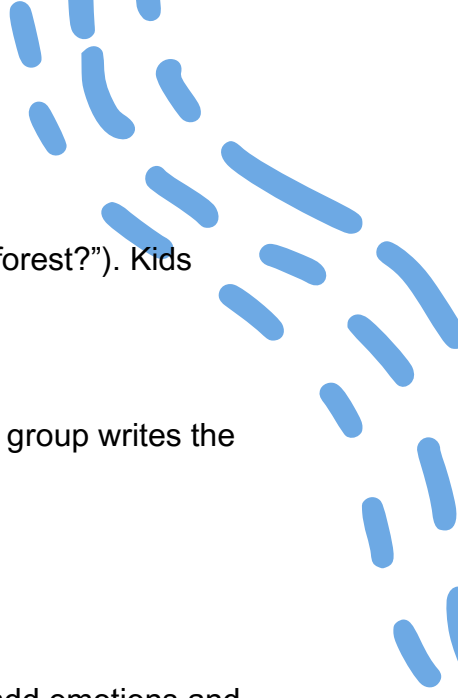
Dialogue Practice (10 mins)

Activity: Role-play conversations between characters.

Objective: Draft the story collaboratively.

Warm-Up Game (10 mins)

Game: “Dialogue Swap”



Write a simple dialogue on slips of paper (e.g., “What happened to the forest?”). Kids randomly pick a slip and act it out.

Group Writing (40 mins)

Divide the kids into groups to write different parts of the story (e.g., one group writes the beginning, another writes the climax).

Rotate groups halfway so everyone contributes to each part.

Sharing & Feedback (10 mins)

Groups read their sections aloud.

Groups illustrate key scenes using markers, crayons, or digital tools to add emotions and dialogues.

Outcome

A draft of the story is written.

Activities Summary

Session 1-2: Expert-led workshops on climate change and environmental impact.

Session 3: Storytelling and imaginative expression training.

Session 4-8: Collaborative story development and structuring.

Discussion Session: Meeting with local teachers, trainers, and specialists to discuss the storytelling approach and its integration into programs.



Additional Adapted Exercises for “Stories in Colours”

☐ **Note for Facilitators:**

While these exercises were originally inspired by environmental storytelling, each activity is intentionally designed to be **flexible and thematically adaptable**. Whether exploring **peacebuilding, civic engagement, life after conflict, emotional healing, or education**, the tools and formats can be reshaped to address the evolving needs and realities of the children and the communities involved. Facilitators are encouraged to tailor characters, prompts, and reflections to local themes and story content.

These exercises are story-centred, emotionally rich, and adaptable across many realities. Facilitators are encouraged to reinterpret each for their own context — healing from war, building peace, promoting values, or creating a future from the stories we share together.

★ **Role Cards & Story Embodiment**

Objective: Develop empathy, emotional intelligence, and ethical thinking by embodying characters from the story.

Duration: 45–60 minutes

Steps:

1. Introduce the activity by explaining: "We are stepping into the story — becoming the characters to understand them better."
2. Present the story's main characters. Discuss their motivations, emotions, and struggles (e.g., a displaced child, a peacebuilder, a returning elder).
3. Distribute printed role cards and simple costume props (crowns, glasses, scarves).
4. Choose a key scene from the story to act out in pairs or small groups.
5. After the scene, reflect together: What emotions came up? Did the character do the right thing? What would you have done?

Materials: Character cards, simple props, printed story scenes.

★ Letters from the Heart of the Story

Objective: Encourage symbolic writing and personal expression from the viewpoint of story elements.

Duration: 40–60 minutes

Steps:

1. Ask children to write a letter as if they were a character or place in the story — a child, a mountain, a ruined school, or even the wind.
2. Prompt reflection: What would they want the world to know? What are their hopes or fears?
3. Distribute printed role cards and simple costume props (crowns, glasses, scarves).
4. Optional: Create a "Letter Tree" to hang all messages or read aloud selected letters.

Materials: Brown or colored paper, twine, markers, stickers, envelopes.

★ Building Our World Back: A 3D Model

Objective: Visualize change through teamwork and imagination using recycled materials.

Duration: 60–75 minutes

Steps:

1. Discuss: How did our story setting look before and after the crisis/conflict/neglect?
2. In groups, design a 3D model of transformation — from destroyed to renewed.
3. Use recycled and natural materials to represent change and recovery.
4. Present each group's model with a short description.

Materials: Brown or colored paper, twine, markers, stickers, envelopes.

★ Character Puppets & Storytelling

Objective: Use creative making and puppet interaction to deepen story engagement and character connection.

Duration: 50–60 minutes

Steps:

1. Assign groups a story character to transform into a puppet.
2. Create the puppet using socks, cardboard, fabric, yarn, buttons.
3. Invite groups to perform a short puppet scene or monologue expressing their character's thoughts or challenges.
4. Reflect: What new understanding emerged about the character's experience

Materials: Socks, fabric, buttons, wood sticks, glue, yarn.

★ Drawing Emotions: Moments that Moved Us

Objective: Help children express and analyze emotional moments visually.

Duration: 30–45 minutes

Steps:

1. Choose and show emotionally intense scenes from the story.
2. Ask: What is the character feeling? Have you ever felt this way?
3. Provide face expression cards or music to inspire mood.
4. Children draw or color based on those emotions.

Materials: Scene images, emotion cards, coloring tools, optional music.

★ Crown of the Everyday Hero

Objective: Recognize children's agency by visualizing their personal leadership in healing or helping.

Duration: 45 minutes

Steps:

1. Discuss: Who are everyday heroes? What makes someone brave, kind, or wise?
2. Make crowns from cardboard and write one action each child pledges (e.g., "I will welcome new students").
3. Optionally, hold a Hero Parade in the classroom.

Materials: Recycled cardboard strips, markers, stickers, scissors, tape.

★ Before and After: Drawing Transformation

Objective: Foster visual thinking about change and healing.

Duration: 45–60 minutes

Steps:

1. Reflect on how the story setting changed from beginning to end.
2. On a single sheet split into two, draw the place before and after healing, peace, or rebuilding.
3. Share and discuss each drawing as a group.
4. Choose a key scene from the story to act out in pairs or small groups.
5. After the scene, reflect together: What emotions came up? Did the character do the right thing? What would you have done?

Materials: A3 sheets, crayons, markers, optional story photos.





★ Change Maker Badges

Objective: Help children claim their role in creating a better world.

Duration: 30–40 minutes

Steps:

1. Ask: What values make someone a peacebuilder or a helper in society?
2. Make badges with a personal slogan (e.g., "I plant hope" or "I speak truth").
3. Decorate and wear badges proudly.

Materials: Cardstock circles, pins/ribbons, colors, glue.

★ Helpful or Harmful? Sorting Game

Objective: Improve critical thinking and understanding of consequences.

Duration: 30–40 minutes

Steps:

1. Prepare illustrated cards with actions (e.g., littering, helping someone, bullying, listening).
2. Use boxes labeled: Helpful / Harmful / Depends.
3. Let kids take turns sorting actions and explaining their choices.

Materials: Action cards, three boxes, labels, whiteboard.

★ Light and Shadow Memory Game

Objective: Strengthen memory and reflect on positive vs harmful experiences.

Duration: 30 minutes

Steps:

1. Create image pairs: safe vs unsafe place, inclusion vs exclusion, peace vs conflict.
2. Shuffle and place face-down.
3. Children match pairs and discuss contrasts: "Which image feels better? Why?"

Materials: 30–40 illustrated cards, flat surface, optional timer.

★ My Promise to Our Future

Objective: Create personal commitments to healing, kindness, and change.

Duration: 40 minutes

Steps:

1. Open with: "What can YOU do to help the world be kinder, safer, more peaceful?"
2. Give each child a paper leaf, heart, or droplet.
3. Write and decorate their promise.
4. Collect on a classroom tree or mural.

Materials: Pre-cut leaf/heart shapes, pens, wall chart, stickers, glue.

Future Horizons

"Stories in Colours" is a work in progress. As the first children's book is finalized and shared, it will serve not only as a creative product but also as a pedagogical tool—an invitation for others to replicate, adapt, and expand the methodology in their own communities and thematics.

The model is highly adaptable and holds promise for expansion into new areas and thematic topics. Future iterations may focus on issues such as inclusion, acceptance, migration, or mental well-being—each using storytelling to explore complex themes through a child-centered lens.

Every story co-created through the "Stories in Colours" methodology can add to a growing library of resilience, imagination, and hope, led by children, supported by local communities, and guided by the belief that our stories can change the world.



Explore More By Scanning This QR Code And Read The Story Created By
The Children In Lebanon



Arabic Version



English Version

Learn more about the Regional Initiative “Stories in Colors: Children Tell
Stories about Climate change” By Scanning This QR Code



To learn more about this approach, or replicate a storytelling cycle in
your community, contact:

Human Security Collective

<https://www.hscollective.org/>

Peace of Art International <https://www.peaceofartinternational.org/>

This methodology was developed by
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