safe, clean water is necessary for life and health and should be guaranteed and protected for all people in a fair and equal way.

Did you know that...

Some facts about my country

There are 5.4 million people living in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, including over 900 thousand Palestinian refugees. Jordan is a stable and relatively prosperous country.

However, 400 thousand people (seven per cent of the population) live on less than two dollars a day and are food insecure.

Jordan is in the top ten of the most water-scarce countries with a dry climate and few rivers. The country depends heavily on rainfall, 92 per cent of which evaporates.

Two-thirds of Jordan's water goes to irrigation of crops.

An average Jordanian uses 85 litres of water a day, an Australian uses 440 litres a day and an American - about 600 litres a day.

Jordan deals with its water shortage by rationing water year round, rehabilitating ancient cisterns, drip-irrigating, treating wastewater, installing water saving devices and rooftop tanks, as well as educating the public on water issues.

Education is a priority in the country, with an increasing number of girls in school. Nine out of ten children go to elementary school.

Read my story to find out...

Why everyone needs clean water for good food and health.

How we can save water in our houses, gardens and farms.

What we did to help people have enough safe drinking water.
Water, Water Everywhere

A plane lands at the airport in Jordan.

Emily gets off the plane.

A group of Australian students and a teacher arrive in Amman on a school exchange trip.

Hi, Emily! My name is Fatima and these are my parents. You will be staying with us.

Welcome to Jordan.

Thank you.

Here is your room, please feel at home.

Very nice! Thank you so much.

An hour later...
**Water, Water Everywhere**

Strange!
I am turning the tap on,
but nothing happens.
A few drops,
no running water...

Well, here in Jordan the shortage of water has been a major problem since ancient times. Our country is dry and its water resources are very limited. Rainfall is the main source of fresh water.

But you cannot count on the rain here, you know. It does not rain very often and when it does most of the water is lost to evaporation. What about Australia?

Well, you are luckier than many millions of people around the world who have no access to safe drinking water. In many countries people lack water.

This holds back development and causes disease, misery and death. That is why water must be available to all.

**Ration:** to give out limited amounts of food or water when there is not much available

**Evaporation:** the process of water changing into a gas

**Refugee:** a person forced to leave home to seek safety or protection in another country

**Purification tablet:** a tablet added to water to make it safe to drink

Some days we have no water at all and have to ask our neighbours for some.

Oh, now I see... You know, at home I do not think about water often. I expect there to be plenty of water when I turn the tap on.

Well, in the centre of our country there are deserts - this is where rain is rare... But most of the people in Australia live along the south-east coastline where there is plenty of rainfall.

Tomorrow morning we will go to school together. After classes our ecology club is going to a Palestinian refugee camp to distribute water containers and purification tablets. Would you like to come with us?

Sure. But why do we need to do that?
Jordan

Today we heard that drinking water was contaminated there. This could spread disease.

Refugees arrived here more than fifty years ago. At first they lived in tents, because they did not expect to stay so long, but they are still living here.

It looks very crowded...

Here we are, Emily. This is the refugee camp, although it seems to be more of a quarter of the city. And these are Mrs. Ahmad, our biology teacher and the ecology club chair and my friends Dina and Sharifa.

Hi, Emily!

Hello!

There is not enough space. The families are growing. More and better services are needed.

Good evening. We are the members of a local eco-club. We have brought you some water containers and purifying tablets.

Oh, thank you! You know, now we are afraid of using what comes from the tap even for bathing or washing dishes.

contaminate: to make something unclean or unsafe
**Water, Water Everywhere**

Our water pipes and **sewers** are old and leaking and our drinking water gets contaminated.

But we have no choice... It is the only water we have.

Running water is piped to our houses once a week. See that storage tank on the roof? Even with that water is not enough to bathe, do laundry or wash the dishes.

Do you get water regularly?

Regularly??! It is our dream!

When we get water, we wash, clean the floors, do the laundry and fill all our containers.

We try to collect and store rainwater. As for **disinfection**, we boil water for drinking and cooking.

Oh yes, we learned that boiling is the best way to kill harmful **bacteria** in water.

Sorry, we are not inviting you in. Our house is too small for all of us to fit in.

I do not want to live in this camp forever. One day, I hope to have my own farm.

**sewer**: a pipe that carries away wastewater  
**disinfection**: water treatment which destroys harmful bacteria  
**bacteria**: tiny living things that are not seen but can cause diseases
This is our son, Mahmoud. His grandparents were farmers before they became refugees. They grew citrus fruits, grapes, dates, aubergines and peppers. Now we don’t have enough land or water to grow our food, so we have to buy it.

Work? I thought you are supposed to study and play when you are a child...

We love to play football. But there are no playgrounds here so we play in the streets.

You are right. And all children, men and women have a right to safe water. All states must make sure that people have enough safe drinking water.

All children should play and have a happy, healthy and safe childhood, shouldn’t they?

This was a great idea, Fatima!

Do you go to school, Mahmoud?

Yes, I do. But some of my friends are not so lucky. Their families cannot afford to send them to school. They need to work to earn money and help support their families.

We can talk to our school to see if you can come and play a match in our school stadium with our football team.

Really? That would be great! I have to run and tell my friends about it.

Many people in Jordan believe so, Dina. They think they have no need to be concerned about the country’s water supply and that it is the government’s duty to take care of it.

So is it the government who should solve our water problem?
For example, many of our houses have piped water and people no longer feel that they must be responsible for it. But what can we do?!

Well, we all consume water. It is our responsibility to save it and use it more effectively, without polluting and wasting it. You know, Jordanians have an old habit of collecting and storing rainwater in cisterns: in the past every large house had one. We could keep up this tradition.

We have one at home, but my mother fills it with tap water.

In Amman it is already required by law to build and maintain a cistern in every new house.

We can do many things to use our household water in a better way.

We know. We should repair leaks.

Take quick showers instead of a bath.

Turn taps off while brushing teeth and washing dishes.

Water plants with used water.

pollute: to release harmful substances into the environment
cistern: a container used to catch and store rainwater
Apart from drinking and household use, water is also needed for agriculture and industry. In developing countries most of the water is used to grow food: for irrigation and watering domestic animals. You will see it tomorrow when we go on a field trip to a farm irrigated by treated wastewater.

Look, Fatima. What is it? An oasis?

No, it looks like a field of barley to me. I think we have arrived - this is the farm we are going to see. The farmer is already waiting for us.

But where do you get water for all these fields?

These crops grow using treated water from a new treatment plant over there. This area was never farmed before: there was no water for irrigation. Now the plant allows cultivation of the desert lands and we have the means to earn an income.

irrigation: supply of water to dry land using pumps and trenches
Unfortunately, some farmers misuse water. They pump out underground water, divert streams to irrigate crops, pollute rivers and lakes with chemical **fertilizers** and **pesticides**. More than half of the water used in irrigation is wasted. There is plenty of room for improvement in the way water is used in agriculture...

Well, many things. See that canal over there? It is lined with concrete and covered to reduce evaporation. We have also introduced drip irrigation. Here, come see for yourselves.

What should be done to improve this situation?

Petra was hand-carved in the mountains and offered natural protection against invaders. Its position as a trading centre depended on water.

Nature was not kind enough to create a river or a lake here. But the local people created permanent water sources for themselves.

Some of them were expert engineers who built dams, canals, **reservoirs**. Huge cisterns were cut in the rocks into which water was carried through canals. The stored water stayed clean and cold in the cisterns.

Excuse me, when did they live here?

More than two thousand years ago.

Wow! Did they have the technology or knowledge to do that?

Isn’t it an inspiring example for us? Today, some people appear to know and care less about water than people who lived centuries ago... Isn’t it about time for us to take responsibility so that future generations can have safe, clean water?

**fertilizer**: a substance added to soil to make it better for growing plants

**pesticide**: chemical substance used to kill insects that harm plants

**reservoir**: a lake, pond, or basin used to store water
Have you thought about...

how daily life changes when there is little clean water?

how Mahmoud’s life is different from Fatima’s and Emily’s?

what Mahmoud’s father meant when he said: “But only if everyone uses water wisely will we be able to make a change.”?

Is it fair that...

poor communities do not have enough safe, clean water?

some people and industries use water in wasteful ways?

Everyone can do something

Make a water use plan for your family or school and put it into action.