

# A Journey of Peace



**Story 16**

**Building the Future**

**Written by:**  
**Joanna Santa Barbara**  
**Mary-Jo Land**  
**Graeme MacQueen**  
**Kevin Land**

**Illustrated by:**  
**Yar Taraky**

*Y. TARAKY  
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Story 16

# **Building the Future**

Second Edition

Written by: Dr. Joanna Santa Barbara  
Mary-Jo Land  
Dr. Graeme MacQueen  
Kevin Arthur Land

Illustrated by: Yar Mohammad Taraky  
Edited by: Mary-Jo Land and Kevin Arthur Land  
Project Coordinators:  
Dr. Seddiq Weera and Dr. Graeme MacQueen

Centre for Peace Studies  
McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada

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## **Story Characters:**

**Jameela:** a ten-year-old girl who lives with her family in a rural area of Afghanistan.

**Ahmed:** Jameela's five-year-old brother.

**Abdullah:** Jameela's fifteen-year-old brother.

**Haleema:** The children's mother.

**Merza:** The children's father.

**Bibi Jan:** The paternal grandmother.

**Kaka Ghulam:** The paternal grandfather.

**Yunus:** The children's uncle who was killed by a landmine at age 20, youngest son of Bibi Jan and Kaka Ghulam.

**Fatima:** The children's aunt, young widow of Uncle Yunus.

**Aly:** The children's uncle, who lives in the city.

**Aisha:** The children's aunt, Aly's wife, who lives in the city.

## **Story Synopsis:**

Jameela lives with her family in a village in Afghanistan. They were already experiencing a great deal of difficulty during the domestic struggles of their homeland when tragedy struck. After coming in contact with a landmine while working in the field, Uncle Yunus was killed and her father Merza lost his leg.

In "**Jameela's Garden**", Jameela and her younger brother Ahmed try to understand the anger and estrangement demonstrated by their older brother Abdullah. With the guidance of their grandmother, Bibi Jan, they learn how they might help him get over the loss of his Uncle Yunus, with whom he was very close.

**“The Wisdom of Bibi Jan”** further demonstrates the grandmother’s role as comforter and adviser. Abdullah’s concern over the change in personality of a school friend due to the trauma of the war triggers Jameela’s revelation that she is having nightmares, and Bibi Jan provides her with a special cure for her fears.

Much more of what is troubling Jameela is presented in **“Making Cookies”**. Her fear of landmines is so strong that, much to Abdullah’s annoyance, she is frightened walking along a path that has already been cleared, . Bibi Jan uses the opportunity of making cookies to help Jameela come to terms with her father’s injury, as well as finding for Fatima a positive means of expression of grief for Yunus.

Jameela is finding it very difficult to fathom the mysteries that are locked up inside **“Merza’s Heart”**. She mourns the loss of the cheerful man she knew before his injury, the one who was full of stories. Her innocent questions bring him to tears, but they also remind him of the man he used to be, and create the yearning in him to be that way again.

The sadness and grief of Fatima, young widow of Yunus, is felt by Jameela and Ahmed, who attempt to cheer her. Bibi Jan notices and suggests ways for the family to come together and celebrate good memories of Yunus, especially by singing **“Yunus’s Song”**.

When their village is shelled through the night, the family faces the grim truth that they must abandon what is most dear to them in **“Leaving Home”**. Each of them deals with this traumatic thought in his or her own way, but ultimately they know it is for the best and put on a brave front as they face the future.

In **“A New Friend”**, the family is staying with an old friend of Merza’s while they are on their journey to the safety of his brother’s place in the city. While there, Abdullah learns a valuable lesson about the nature of making judgments about people who are different in either the language that they speak or their beliefs.

As the family continues its journey to the city, Abdullah discovers that Jameela has brought her kitten from home and has kept it hidden the entire journey. In anger, he takes the kitten from her and throws it in the undergrowth on the side of the road. Jameela is angry with her brother and refuses to acknowledge his existence. It is up to Bibi Jan to find a way for there to be "**Reconciliation**".

In "**Merza's Anger**", Merza's loss of control over his temper frightens both Jameela and Ahmed. The emotional upheaval wreaks havoc on both children, and causes them to be short with each other. While hiding, Ahmed overhears his father talking to Bibi Jan about his own insecurity regarding the loss of his leg. When the child is discovered, it becomes an opportunity for bridges to be mended between father and son.

Bibi Jan's diplomatic skills are once again put to the test in "**Making Peace**". While looking for Merza's brother Aly and his wife Aisha in the city, the family is staying at a camp for displaced persons located in an old schoolhouse. While in the cramped quarters where they must make their temporary home, Abdullah gets into a fight with a boy his own age over the intrusion of his bicycle in the others' living space.

As "**Abdullah and the Ten-foot Man**" opens, Abdullah, now living with his family at his uncle's house for a week, comes down with a fever. He recalls his childhood dreams about wanting to grow up to be a soldier before he falls asleep. He dreams about meeting a giant soldier in the market who teaches him a lesson about the reality of war.

In "**A New Life**", Jameela expresses her joy at being able to meet Aly and Aisha as helping to offset being away from her home. However, when Haleema tells her that she will soon have a baby sister or brother, Jameela's anxiety over the instability of their lives takes over. Her mother helps her to understand why this is a blessing for them all.

“**Going Home**” begins with the news that after a year, the family is finally going to make the journey back home. As the family makes their preparations for their return, it is clear that there is still some tension between Haleema and Fatima.

The relationship between the two women is the main theme in “**Haleema and Fatima**”. The family is journeying back to their village, accompanied by Aly and Aisha, who will stay with them for a visit there. Suddenly, Haleema’s baby is born, and Fatima helps her, using her new skills as a midwife. Though there were difficulties, Fatima is able to safeguard their health. This prompts Haleema to reconcile with her sister-in-law.

The healing process and renewal of the bonds that exist within the family are very evident in “**The End of the Journey**”. It opens with a dream that Bibi Jan has, which indicates the level of anxiety she has for the return trip and the condition of their home when they arrive. When they do, they find that the damages are minimal, and they begin the process of rediscovering what is truly important during the first meal they share together.

“**Building the Future**” presents the family coming together as a unit and working to restore their home. They can now turn their concerns to the community at large. After Abdullah encounters a few of his friends in the village, he comes up with the idea of rebuilding homes that have been damaged in the war. Along with the others, Abdullah begins a campaign of community restoration which also solidifies the next step in his personal growth and heightens the admiration of his younger siblings. The final image of the story is that of a community working and singing together.

## **Healing Elements:**

**Healing images and symbols:** rebuilding, laughter, joy.

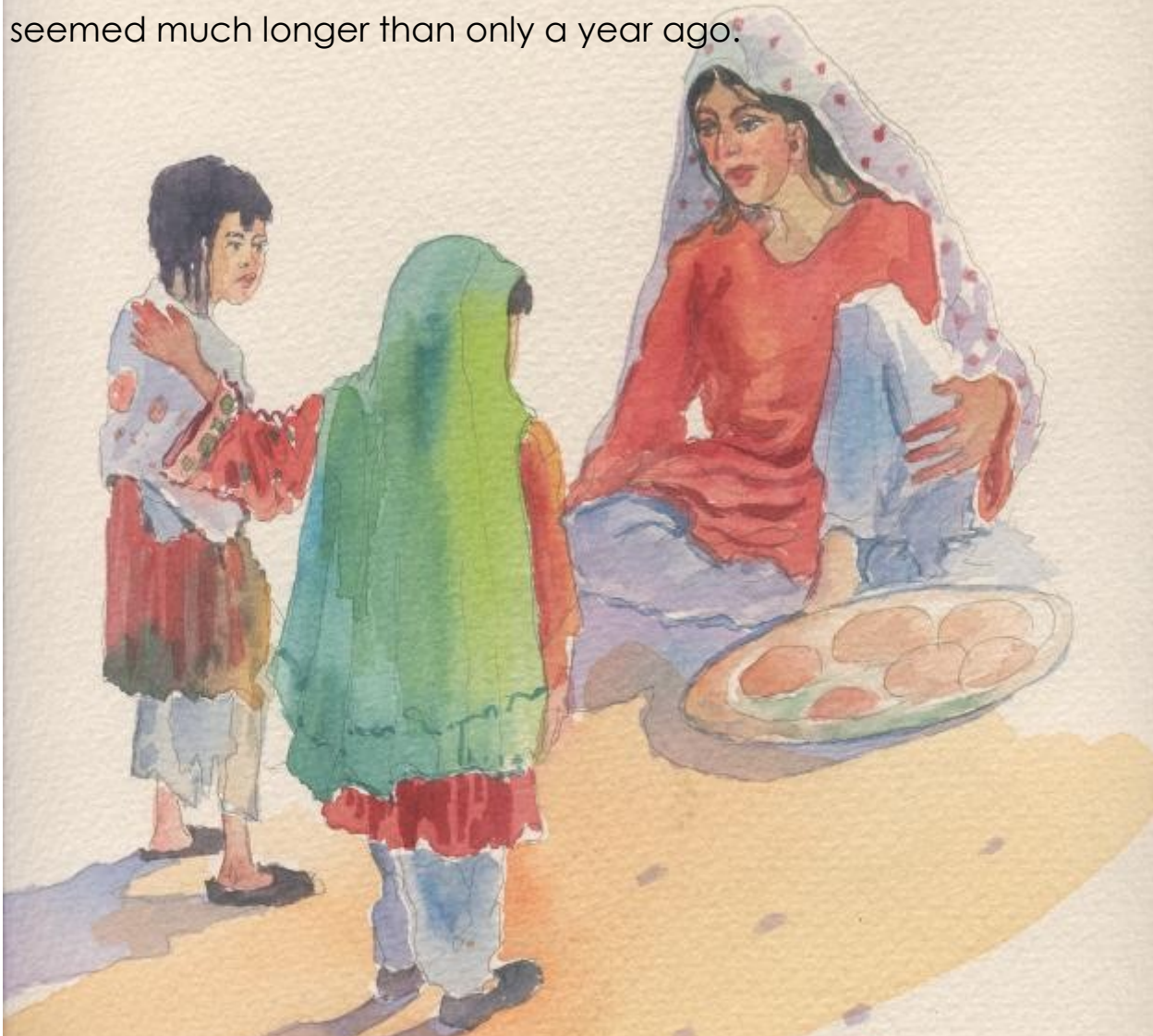
**Modeling of peaceful and virtuous interactions:** generosity, sharing, giving, service to others, cooperation, humour, recognition of virtuous behaviour.

**Problem Issues:** Coping with destruction.

**Healing Strategies:** Cooperative work, singing.



After a year in exile from their home, everyone -- grandparents, parents, aunts, uncle and children -- worked hard to resettle and restore the household. So much had happened since they fled the fighting which swept through their village that it seemed much longer than only a year ago.



The children, Abdullah, Jameela and Ahmed were very glad to be back. Their house was damaged very little, but not every family had been so fortunate.

"My friend Shazia has to stay with neighbours," said Jameela. "Her house is a wreck. She has hardly any clothes. Mama, can I give her one of my dresses?"

"Darling, you haven't many clothes yourself. But if you want to give her something, you can."

Abdullah came in. "I've walked around the village. Three houses are completely demolished, and another five are badly damaged. Then a lot more have some parts damaged. We were pretty lucky. I don't know what those other families will do. Some of them are back now, like us."

"Maybe a magic giant will come along," said little Ahmed. "He'll take some clay and make bricks as quick as a flash, and build them into beautiful houses. He'll stick his big finger down to make a chimney hole..."

By now, everyone was laughing at Ahmed, who was pretending to be a giant, clomping around with heavy footsteps.

Abdullah went out again to look at the ruined houses. In some, one or two men were slowly dismantling the remnants of the walls. He met two of his friends from school. They talked about what had happened to them in the year since the village was shelled. As they chatted, they watched the men in their sad demolition task.

"No school yet, " said Massoud. "The building was pretty badly shelled."

"What'll we do?" said Ajmal. "I suppose our families will find lots for us to work at."

"I'll be working in Mines Awareness education," said Abdullah, trying to conceal his pride in his new job. "They're starting an office in this area next month. I did some training in the city."



"Wow!" said Ajmal. "Lucky you!"

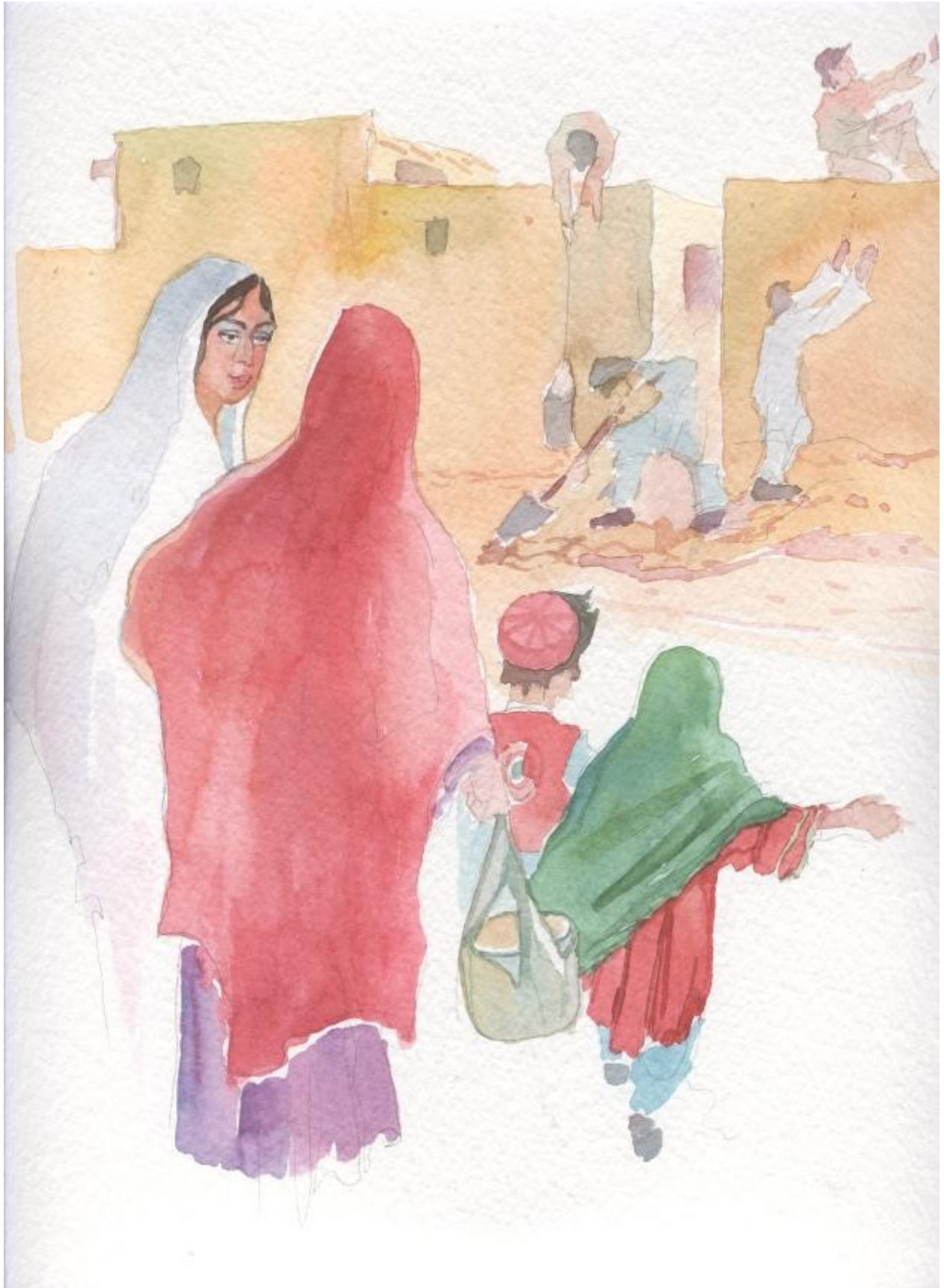
"Hey, guys!" Abdullah looked excited. "What if we form a team to help people fix their houses? We can do that work. My Dad has shown me how to mix the mud and lay the bricks."

"Great idea, Abdullah. I know some other guys who might join us in this," said Massoud.

When they met the next day there were seven teenage boys who wanted to join the rebuilding team. They went together to the worst -hit house and offered their services. The unhappy-looking man working in the wreckage looked stunned at first, then smiled and assigned them tasks. The boys worked very hard. They sang school songs as they worked. Passing villagers stopped to look. They made a big difference in a short time to the task of restoring the house.

By the time Abdullah arrived home to eat, the family had already heard about the team of teenage rebuilders. They had also heard that it was Abdullah's idea to start it. Haleema approached him as he stood in the doorway. She embraced him and then stepped back to admire how much he had grown.

"Abdullah, my son, my wild one," Haleema put her hands on his tall shoulders. "I've worried and prayed so much about you. Now I know Allah is answering my prayers. I'm so proud of what you're doing."



Ahmed looked up from his meal and stared up at the immensity of his brother. "I think Abdullah is the magic giant," he said, and the others laughed.

Kaka Ghulam said, "The shura is organizing the reconstruction. They'll tell you which places need help the most. Maybe they can get the word out to form more teams."

"I'm glad you are my brother," Jameela called.

"I am, too," Abdullah responded. "I look forward to the day when I can go back to teaching you." Jameela smiled at the thought of doing more reading and writing again.

The next day, the boys worked hard. At lunchtime, Jameela and Ahmed helped Aisha and Fatima bring them all food and drink. The boys began singing together again. They changed the words of one of their school songs:

"War is fire burning all in its path.

We are burned but our limbs are healing.

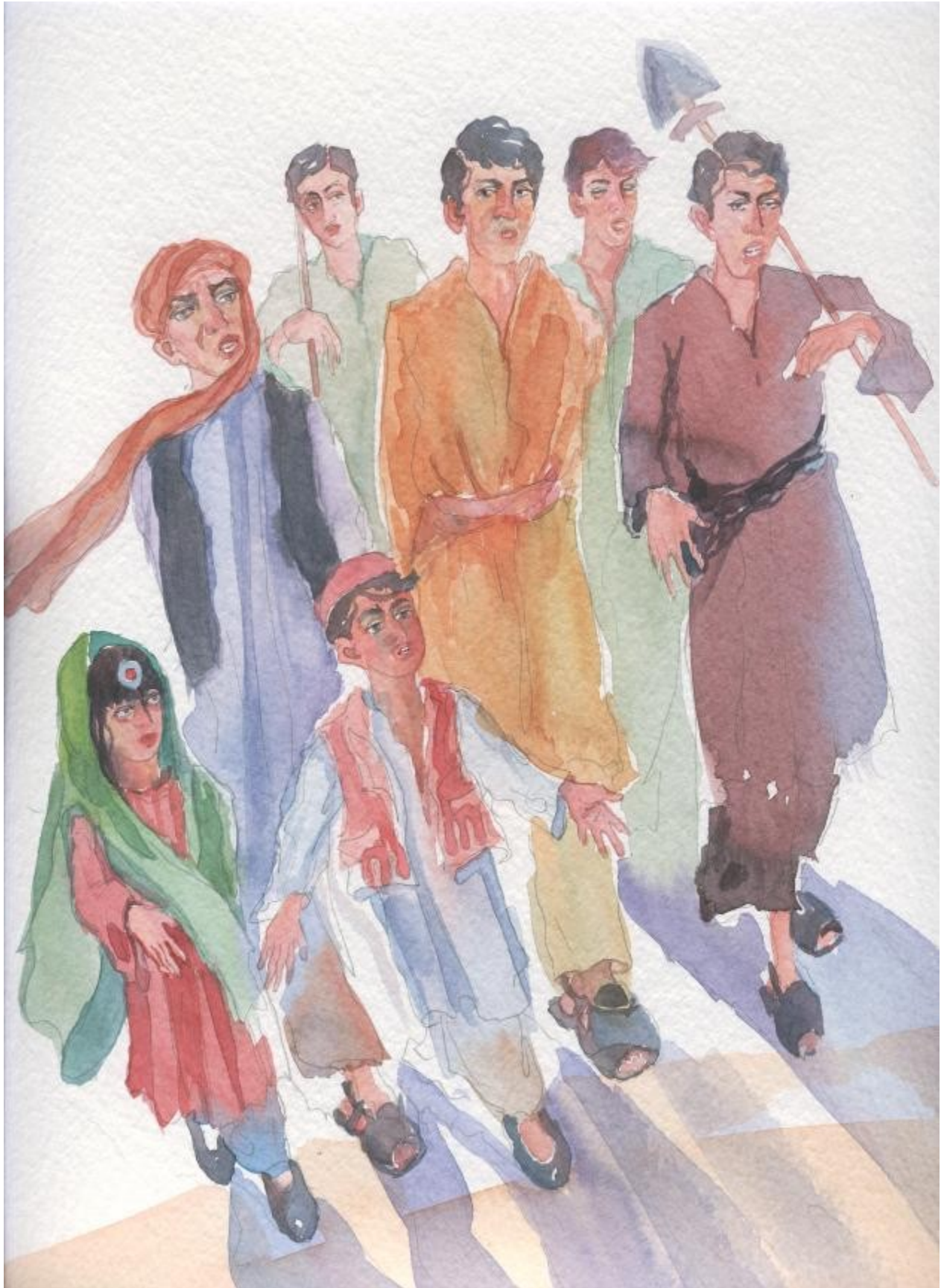
Now we must rebuild our homes,

Now is the time to reconcile with our brothers and sisters,

Now we shall untie the knots

And sing and dance with each other, free of hatred."

Jameela, Ahmed, Fatima and Aisha quickly learned the new words and raised their voices with the others. There were only eleven young people but it was amazing how far their voices could be heard.



## Story 16 Building the Future

### Things to Talk About:

1. Have you ever worked together with others to achieve a common goal? What did you do?
2. With cooperation, Abdullah's village will be rebuilt more quickly. What kinds of cooperation are necessary to rebuild your village, town or country?

### Things To Do:

1. Create a Peace Garden in your home, your, school, your community.
2. Sing peace songs.
3. Help your neighbours who are less fortunate than you.



