

# WATER JUSTICE, A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE



## Aims

Use role cards to understand our connection with water from a personal to global level. Explore this connection by roleplay. Using examples from around the world.



## Age:

Age 12+



## Time

30 minutes

## Instructions

**1. There are 15 role cards.** Give each young person a role card. If there are more than 15 young people some of them can work in pairs.

**2. Allow time for the young persons to familiarise themselves with their role** (think about who they are, where they live, their family, what kind of life they have and so on).

**3. Ask the young people to stand in character at the back of the room** in a single row with their backs to the wall. They should not share their role card with anyone else. This activity will also work well in a larger hall, or outside if weather permits.

**4. Explain that you are going to read out a number of statements** (see below). After each statement is read out, young person must take:

- **A GIANT STEP** if their character can do the action or if the statement fully applies to them
- **A BABY STEP** if they can do it with difficulty or if the statement applies to them a little bit
- **NO STEP** at all if they can't do it, or the statement doesn't apply to them

The aim of the activity is **not to reach the other side of the room** but to experience the life of their character.

**5. Allow time for the group to reflect on each statement** and then decide if they should take a step.

**6. As the statements are read out, young persons begin to spread throughout the activity space,** with some taking giant steps and others hardly moving at all.

## Statements

- I live in a peaceful environment in a secure home
- It is likely that I have or will finish secondary school
- I could go to college when I finish school
- There are no money worries in my house
- I live in a safe place
- I look forward to my life ahead and my future is secure
- I have enough food to eat and water to drink
- My family rely on local water sources for our livelihood
- My family do not have to worry about where our water comes from
- Our water is always safe to drink
- There are no threats to our water supply
- The weather does not affect our family income
- My home is not affected by extreme weather
- If there are problems with our water supply, we are able to do something about it

**Debrief:** take the group out of their character roles, and ask them to discuss as a group the following questions:

- Who moved furthest and why? (The person or people who moved the furthest should be the character who was the most water secure)
  - Who got left behind and why? (The person or people furthest behind will be the most water insecure)
  - How did you feel if you were moving fast and taking lots of steps?
  - How did you feel if you were moving slowly and not taking many steps?
  - Generally speaking, what are the main threats to water security coming through in the activity?
- Are there threats that apply to a lot of the characters?
  - Are there any characters who faced a threat that no-one else or very few others faced?
  - What are the consequences of water insecurity?
  - What do you think are the implications for the whole global community?

Allow the young people to feedback from their discussions of the above questions. Once each young person/group have had a chance to speak, choose one or more of the characters and pose the following question:

**What possible solutions can you come up with to make this person more water secure?**

**Summary:** Using character cards to explain global issues in youth work fosters awareness, critical thinking, and empathy among young individuals while empowering them to take action and become informed global citizens.

## Role cards



### Josie – 17 year old girl – Cape Town, South Africa

"I live with my family in a suburb of Cape Town, quite close to Table Mountain. I have a part time job in the ticket office for the cable car. I go to a local school where I am in grade 12. I sit my final exams this year and hope to go on to university to study medicine. I like living in Cape Town, the summers are usually dry and warm, so we spend most of our time outside playing football and tennis. The winters can be wet but usually not too cold. However, a few years ago things got very dry. We had no rain for three years in a row during winter from 2015 to 2018, which meant that the city was hit by a drought, which we were not prepared for. The water levels in the city's dams dropped really low, and the authorities brought in sever restrictions on water use. Level 6 restrictions meant that everyone had only 87 litres per day, which then went down to 50 litres, which is barely enough for a 90-second shower, some water to drink, cook and brush teeth, and one toilet flush per day. If it got worse, the government were going to move to level seven, which we called 'Day Zero', when the taps would be turned off and we would collect our water from distribution points protected by armed guards. Thankfully the rains came back and it didn't happen this time."



### Jassim – 14 year old boy – Qatar

"I live with my family in an apartment in Doha, the capital city of Qatar. It is a great place to live, I have lots of friends, and there is lots for us to do in our area. I go to an international school, with lots of other kids from many different countries. The world cup was held here recently, and we all had a great time going to the matches, though we couldn't get tickets to the final. My dad works as an engineer with the Qatari government. His job is to make sure there is enough water for everyone in Qatar to drink. He says he is very busy, working on some big projects. He brought me to see the place where they turn sea water into drinking water, it was very impressive. He travels quite a bit into the desert where he says they are building some big reservoirs to hold all the water that we need in Doha. It does get very hot here, especially in summer, and there is no rain at all really."



### Simon – 14 year old boy – Ireland

"During term time I get up around 7.30am to get ready to catch the bus to school. I live in the countryside, so the bus collects me at the end of the road. During the summer holidays we spend a lot of time exploring the area around my house and going on different summer camps. My favourite is Cul camp! When we have some good weather, my dad will bring out the paddling pool and fill it up. It is quite small, but still takes ages to fill with the hosepipe, and the water is cold at the start, but soon warms up. A couple of years ago it was really dry for a few weeks, and we weren't allowed to use the hosepipe. This year the weather has been really bad. I heard on the news that July this year was the wettest one ever in Ireland! Thankfully we were on holidays in Spain where it was so hot! We had to make sure to cool down every day in the pools at our campsite, and drink lots of water."



### Daniel – 15 year old boy – Chile

"I live in Futaleufú, a town in central Chile in the foothills of the Andes mountains, near the border with Argentina. I go to the local school with my friends, and I quite enjoy living here. My parents own a rafting company, and we take tourists out on rafts on the Futaleufu River, and the Espolon River which has some great rapids, including some class 5 rapids that are very challenging. The river flows down from the mountains and through our town, I think it starts in Argentina. The whole way of life here in the town is based around the river and the mountains. People come here to go hiking up the glaciers, but it is not as easy now as it used to be. My father says the glaciers are getting smaller, he says you have to walk about 5km further up the valley to get to the glacier, than you did when he was my age. The rivers are also higher than they used to be, which has meant that some areas are closed now to fishing because they are flooded and too dangerous. The rapids are sometimes higher when the summer is hot, and the melting happens quicker or sooner than usual."

## Role cards



### Lujan – 12 year old girl – Palestine

"I live in a village in the Jordan Valley in Palestine. It is part of Area C, the part of my country under full control of the Israeli army due to the illegal occupation. I go to school in the nearest town, but the school is overcrowded, and we don't have all the things we need for class. The school were building a new classroom, but the soldiers came in and knocked it down before it was finished. My father is a sheep farmer, we have around 300 sheep in the flock, and we also grow some crops, but not much because we don't have enough water. My father has to buy enough water to fill our three tanks each day for the sheep to drink, and for our family to use. The nearby village used to have a well which we were able to use, but it has dried up. They say there is water underneath the ground, but the Israelis control most of it. They came and destroyed some pipes and a water tank that local farmers were using to get water for their farms. It seems that most of the water goes to the settlers, they are able to grow whatever they want."



### Parvati – 10 year old girl – Assam, India

"I live with my family in a small town just a few miles from Guwahati, which is the largest city in the Indian state of Assam. We live close to a tea plantation where both my mother and father work, which is close to the banks of the Brahmaputra River. I go to school in the local primary school, but not many students go there, and the teacher doesn't always turn up. There are other private schools near me, but the fees are too high for my family to pay for me and my brothers. My parents don't get a lot of money for working on the plantation, so we have a BPL (Below Poverty line) card from the government to get extra rice, 5kg per person per month. It is hard to get clean water to drink, we often must buy it as well. My mother works for 13 hours a day picking tea and gets paid very little. My father works in the factory, and gets paid a bit more, but not much. The weather is dryer than it usually is, so not as much tea is produced, meaning less money for my parents. The plantation relies heavily on water from the river, but there is a problem with that now too. The Chinese plan to build a dam at great bend, just north of Assam, which will mean there is less water in the river, and less water for the tea crop. "



### Peter – 14 year old boy – Cleveland, USA

"I live with my family close to the centre of Cleveland, just a little bit away from the shore of Lake Erie. My father is a truck driver, and my mother works in a local school as a cook, the same school I go to. I am in the ninth grade and hope to graduate from high school in a couple of years. I don't think I can go to college, but I would like to travel and see other parts of America. Cleveland is a nice enough place to live. Summers here are quite warm, but the winter can be very cold with lots of snow. There is lots to do in the city, but things are expensive. I love basketball and went to a cavaliers game last year for my birthday. Even though both my parents work, we don't have a lot of money. Dad often talks about the bills he has for water, and how hard they are to pay. I think he is behind in his payments, but he doesn't really talk to me about it much. I know that they threaten to take away your home if you don't pay your water and sewage bills, and they can also shut off your water supply if you don't pay, which I know from school would not be a good thing."



### Farah – 9 year old girl – Bangladesh

"I live in a town in Bangladesh, near the mangrove forests of Sundarbans on the coast. My family are farmers, and we depend on the rice harvest every year for most of our money. We also have different crops like Mustard Oil and other types of fruit like blackberries. We get a lot more rain here than we used to, some say three times as much than a few years ago. The rain is also a lot heavier than it used to be, which means it floods here often, and sometimes destroys our crops. My mum says that the water brings lots of sand, which is not good for the paddy fields. The rice doesn't grow as well as it should, and we don't have as much to sell. My father has to spend more money on water and other stuff for farming. Sometimes the sea is really high, and it leaves behind salt that also destroys the rice paddy. We do have a tap in the house, but it is often dirty, and makes us sick. I am still going to school, but I don't know how long my family will be able to afford to send me. A lot of my friends have left with their families and went to the city. I really hope we don't have to do this."

## Role cards



### Margaret – 16 year old girl – Malawi

“I get up early in the morning with my family. Before we do anything else, the whole family goes to fetch water from the shallow well. It takes about \_\_\_\_\_ to get there and back. Then it is time to get the younger children ready for school and go and get some firewood or make charcoal. Most of my day is spent doing chores, looking after the younger children, and fetching water. We usually have to go five times a day to get water. My mother carries as much as she can each time, sometimes 40 litres, but we still must spend a lot of time doing this. I used to go to school, but I stopped after five years. I am thinking about going back. It takes a lot of time and energy to get enough water for the family. In the dry season, when the well dries up, we have to walk even further upstream to a spring. The water patterns are changing and it’s making it harder to get enough water each day. Sometimes the storms come, and the floods wash away our crops. If I could change one thing about our way of life, it would be to make it easier to get water each day.”



### Séan – 15 year old boy– Cork City, Ireland

“I live with my Dad in an apartment above our family sports trophy business in Cork city. My Grandad owned the shop before my dad. It’s been in our family for two generations. The area where the shop is is prone to flooding and over the last 20 years my Dad says we’ve had some really bad ones. I remember the really bad flood in 2014. I was 6 years old and I was looking out the window in our flat above the shop and this guy went rowing by in a canoe, the waters were waist high. The floods come after weeks of heavy rainfall and high tides and there’s this immediate impact on us as a family, we have to close the shop and do all the mopping up and cleaning. My Dad is afraid that next year or the year after, it will happen again. My Dad says we might have to sell the shop and move but I don’t want that to happen.”



### Margaret – 12 year old boy – Malawi

“I live with my family in the city of Lismore in New South Wales. Floods caused by torrential rain hit our city in 2022. We had to evacuate our home. We woke up and saw the carpets bubbling then the water kept rising until it was up to our waist. We had to climb onto the roof and wait for help. Luckily our neighbour has a boat. He heard us and came for us. We lived with grandparents until the water subsided. Our house and our stuff were mostly destroyed. We had flood insurance so thankfully we could get some money to help rebuild our house and replace some of our belongings.

Scientists say we months worth of rain fall within a week. the floods were caused by a mix of bad weather but were worsened by climate change and a La Niña weather phenomenon. Australia is exposed, for a third straight year, to the La Niña weather phenomenon in the Pacific Ocean, which typically brings above-average rainfall to the country’s east. We are just hoping it doesn’t happen again next year.”

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/australia-east-coast-floods-2022>



### Sive – 10 year old girl – Ireland

“I live with my family in a small village in county Meath, close to Navan. I go to the local primary school, but in a couple of years I will have to get the bus into Navan for big school. I love where we live, it is really close to the Boyne River, which runs along the bottom of my garden. In the summertime, we do a lot of fishing in the river, looking for different animals, and if it is really hot, we sometimes go swimming down by the bridge where there is a small beach, but only if mum or dad come with us. Last year dad wouldn’t let us go swimming in the river as he said the water is bad, and we shouldn’t take a chance with it. I know he is involved with other people in trying to stop a local factory from putting more wastewater from their factory into the river. I am worried about this because I don’t want our river to be polluted. I also think we get our drinking water from the river. I know it is treated and made safe, but it still is a worry. I saw that even Pierce Brosnan made a video about this problem!”

## Role cards



### **Maria – 12 year old girl – Honduras**

"I live with my family in a small village in the Aguan Valley in Northern Honduras. My family are farmers, we grow mostly corn, but a little cacao and some beans. I go to school in the village, but my two brothers work on the farm helping my father. When I finish primary school, I will work on the farm too. This is a dangerous place to live, many people are attacked and sometimes killed by the soldiers and police because of the iron oxide mine upriver. Some of the local people have been in prison for years for protesting against the mines. We need the water from the river for our crops, and for our family, but the water is dangerous because of the mine, they are putting things in the water that make us sick and kill our crops. We use the river water for washing clothes, but we can't use it for drinking and cooking so we must buy more water which we can't really afford. There are lots of protests about the mine, but no one listens to us, or speaks to us about it."



### **Max – 13 year old boy – Newquay, England**

"I live with my family in the town of Newquay in southwest England. It is famous for surfing and has a couple of really good beaches. Summers here are fantastic. As soon as the school holidays come around it time for surfing and just hanging out at the beach. Lots of tourists come here in the summer which is great, as my family own a small sandwich and ice cream shop, and we are always very busy in the summertime! In fact, the whole town relies on tourists coming to visit in the summer, and surfers coming all year round. Unfortunately, the water quality has not been great this past couple of years. There is always some sewage that gets released into the water when there is a storm, but it seems to be more and more recently. The lifeguards are always putting up the danger signs. Local people worry that it will drive tourists away from the area and make people swimming in the water sick. This doesn't affect our water at home, it is still safe, but we all live in the ocean for the summertime, and I don't want that to stop."

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