



Bountiful Harvests



Hello, my name is Aisha.

I'm a Peace Corps Volunteer in the Middle Eastern country of Jordan, where I teach elementary students.

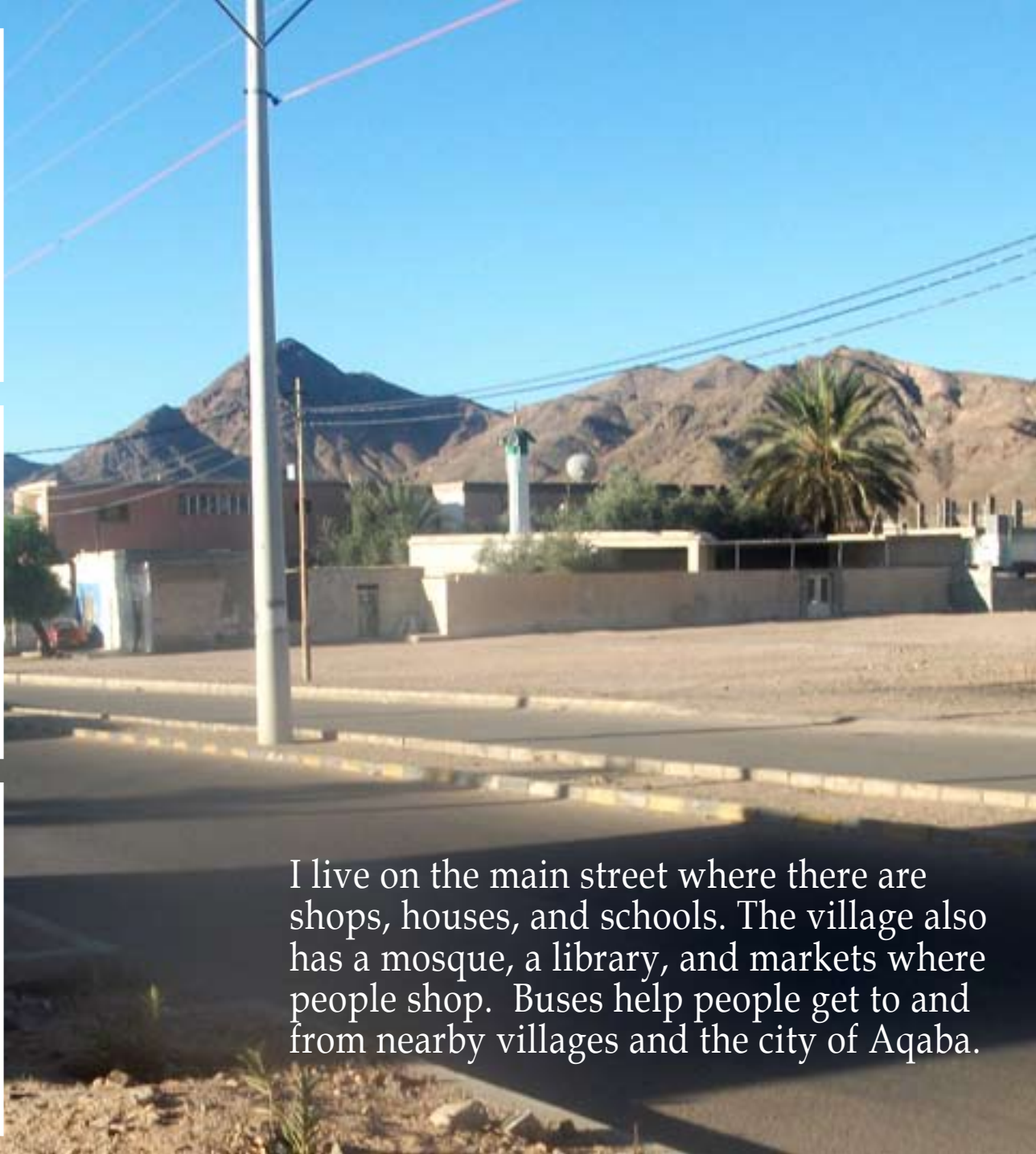
These are my students gathered outside of the village girls' elementary school.



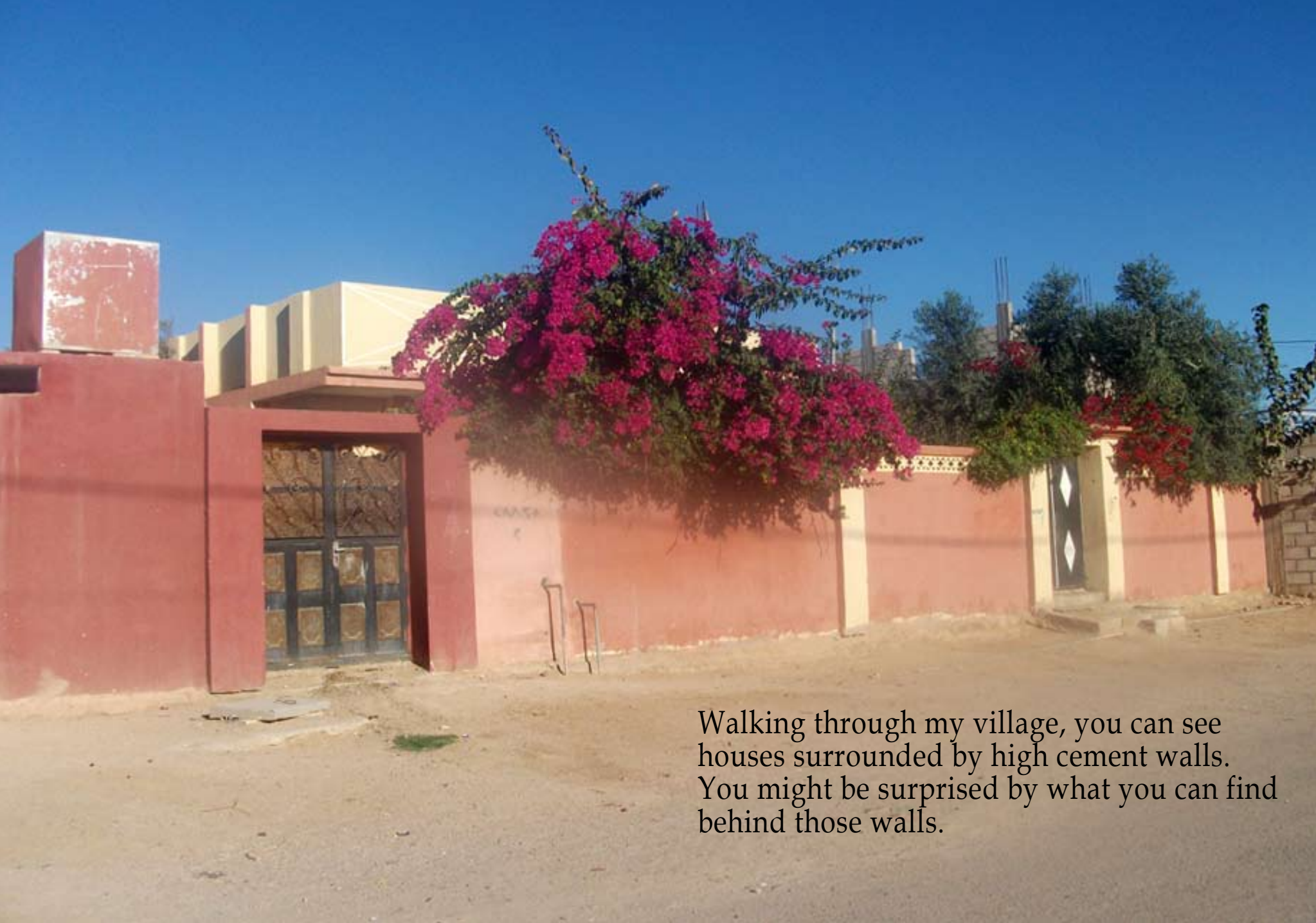
The weather is hot for most of the year, with a few cold months in winter. We live in a desert climate, so the people in my village are delighted the few times of year when there is rain.

On the street sign, you can see the names of two large cities, Amman and Aqaba, written in the national language of Arabic.





I live on the main street where there are shops, houses, and schools. The village also has a mosque, a library, and markets where people shop. Buses help people get to and from nearby villages and the city of Aqaba.



Walking through my village, you can see houses surrounded by high cement walls. You might be surprised by what you can find behind those walls.



Many people have gardens full of olive and fruit trees. My landlord has the most beautiful garden I have ever seen.

Besides the olive trees, he has fig, guava, pomegranate, citrus, and palm trees. You can also see grapevines with large green leaves and beautiful green and red grapes.

Olive trees are extremely important to the villagers and grow in almost everyone's backyard. When it is time to harvest, there is a big festival. During harvest time, all family members help pick the olives. Harvest time could take a couple of weeks with hard work from everyone to get every single olive on the tree.

I enjoyed picking olives with the villagers. There are harvest songs that people sing while they are working. People are happy during harvest time, but they are relieved when there are no olives left on the trees.



Women take some of the harvested olives to be pickled. That way, they can last for the whole year. Many people like to eat green olives for breakfast every day of the year.






People also take bags of olives to the press to be made into olive oil.

For many families, this olive oil will last for the whole year and they will never need to buy it from the market.



A white tray with a scalloped edge and two handles. On the tray, there is a silver teapot with a black handle and lid, two clear glasses filled with dark tea, and two large, round, golden-brown pies. The pies have a slightly textured surface with small dark spots. The tray is placed on a light-colored surface.

When people come home with their fresh olive oil, they celebrate and bake special pies that they give to friends and family.

The olive oil is not the last stage of the harvest. People take the crushed olive seeds home and dry them to be used as fuel, or *jift*.

My landlord's family uses the olive *jift* as cooking fuel when they bake their bread.

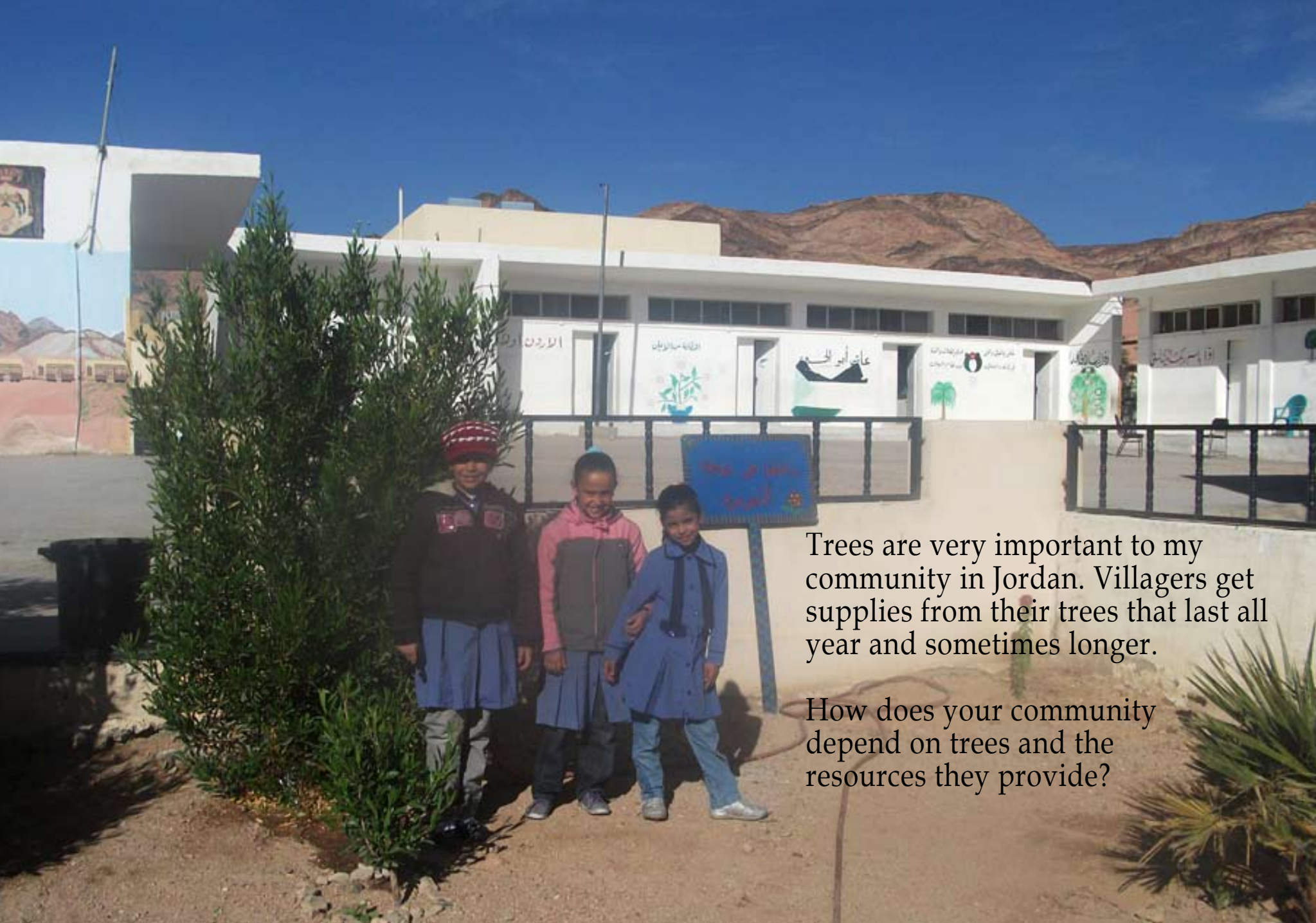


Mothers work together
and produce bars of soap
using olive oil.



Students, like the ones who joined my garden club, take care of the olive trees on the school ground. They're proud of their work!





Trees are very important to my community in Jordan. Villagers get supplies from their trees that last all year and sometimes longer.

How does your community depend on trees and the resources they provide?



PAUL D. COVERDELL

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