

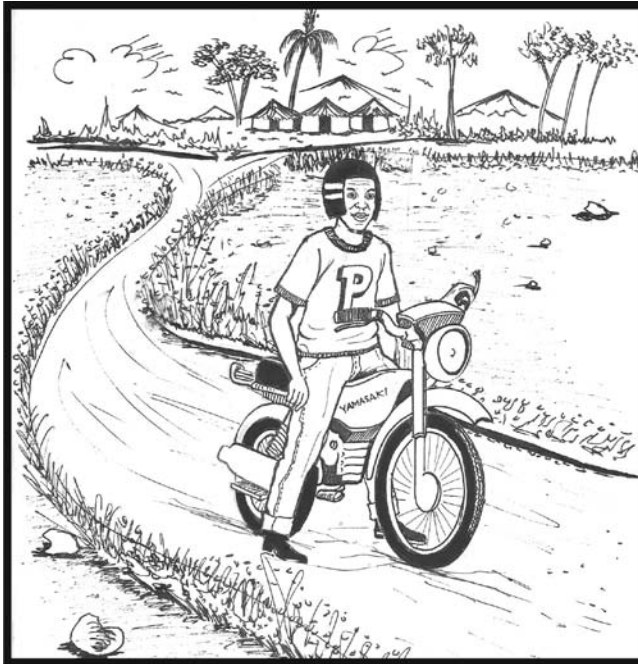


USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



The Adventures of Pehn Pehn Ben

FOR NEW READERS



The Life and Times of a Young Liberian Motorcycle Rider

**USAID'S CORE EDUCATION SKILLS
FOR LIBERIAN YOUTH PROJECT**

August 2011

Foreword

The following story has been developed through the support of USAID's Core Education Skills for Liberian Youth (CESLY) program. The USAID/CESLY project seeks to improve educational opportunities and outcomes for Liberian youth and young adults. USAID/CESLY increases access to education among Liberian youth through alternative basic education, enhances the overall quality of teaching, and collaborates with government and community organizations toward long-term sustainability of education for youth in Liberia. The project helps Liberian young people develop the skills and attitudes necessary to progress in the conventional academic system, transition into skills training or livelihoods, maintain healthy lifestyles and participate in their communities.

One of the key focus areas of the USAID/CESLY project is the promotion a culture of reading among youth in Liberia. When reading skills are strengthened, performance in all content areas are likely to improve.

Currently, a great scarcity of locally produced materials in schools leading to a high level of over dependency on educational materials used by learners that are externally produced and lack local orientation and context. These are therefore difficult for facilitators and learners to understand and practicalize. Or more commonly, there is little to read-- so most often, people don't read. In occasional cases, where reading is done, learners memorize the same book and recite it over and over again. This does not develop their ability to comprehend, analyze and think critically.

The author of this story is Watchen Johnson Babalola. Watchen has written about a young Liberian motorcycle rider. In

Liberia, motorcycle riders are often stigmatized as reckless, irresponsible youth. Many motorcycle riders are presumed to be ex-combatants. However the story of Penh Penh Ben provides an example of a young male motorcycle rider can be a peacemaker, a good citizen, a critical thinker and an example to his peers. This story is provided as an accompaniment to the Sonie Story series so that both young Liberian males as well as females may get to know the life of a youth who faces the same challenges they do, a youth who can serve as a role model.

The themes highlighted in this book center around themes covered in the life skills and work readiness components of the alternative basic education curriculum. Some issues include: corruption, honesty, integrity, peacemaking, safe driving, nepotism, leadership, working hard to earn a living and other issues that confront youth in day to day modern Liberia.

This story is intended to be used in conjunction with the Alternative Basic Education Curriculum. The story can be used to support in-class work or reading outside the classroom. The story can also be used to generate project ideas and service learning activities so that what learners acquired in the classroom can be put into practice to help improve their community.

Those who use this story in the classroom may also choose to use it to practice the basic components of reading (such as phonemic awareness, decoding and word recognition, vocabulary, oral reading fluency, comprehension, analysis and critical thinking).

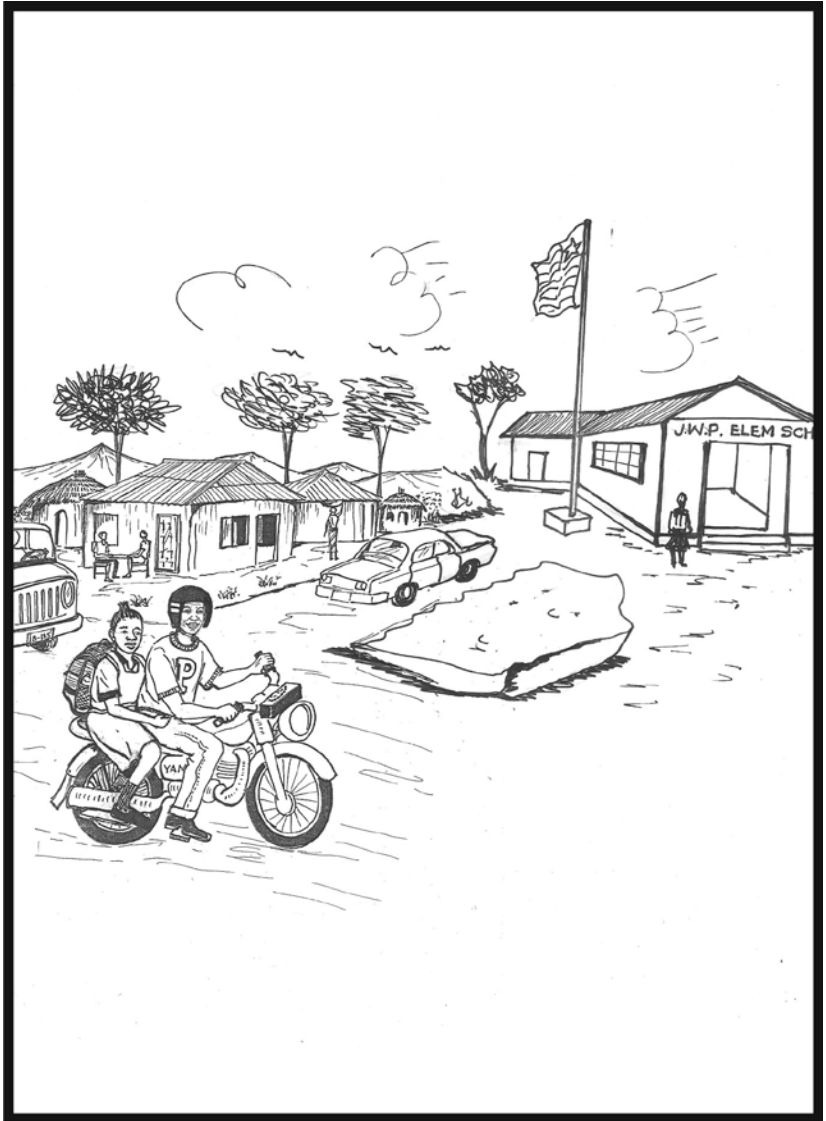
The story can also be used to stimulate critical thinking, produce generative themes, and raise issues that make students want to turn the page. After reading a story, a facilitator may

want to discuss with learners, “Why did the story end this way? What happened next? What led to this outcome? What would you have done if you were in the story? Could things have turned out another way?” Critical thinking around the themes in the story can be developed either in oral discussion or in written follow up.

Equally important to the creation of a culture of reading is a culture of writing. Writing cannot be separated from the act of reading. Indeed, writing is what helps new readers practice and internalize new skills. In order to promote a culture of writing, learners may be encouraged to write new conclusions or following chapters to the story contained in this publication. Facilitators can also develop questions that learners respond to in writing. Learners can express their thoughts through simple sketch, drawing, song, role play or any creative way. This story should inspire teachers and educators to work with students and encourage students to create their own original stories.

While the text was written by Watchen Babalola, the illustrations were completed by Saye Dahn and Francis Coleman, Liberian illustrators.

This publication is the property of the United States Agency for International Development. It was prepared by Education Development Center, Inc. for the USAID/Core Education Skills for Liberian Youth (CESLY) Project, Contract No. EDH-I-00-05-00031-00. This publication is made possible by the support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development. The contents are the sole responsibility of Education Development Center, Inc., and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.



Pehn-Pehn Ben

Hello.

My name is Ben.

I am a young Liberian.

I go to the University of Liberia (U.L.)

This is my first year.

I want to be a doctor one day.

I grew up the hard way.

My parents died when I was very young.

My grandmother raised me.

She always gave me good advice.

She said, "Always work hard.

Make sure you go to school.

Be honest. Do not break the law.

Respect others. Be a good citizen.”

Then the war came.

I left my village.

I ran to Monrovia.

First I was a houseboy.

That was my job.

I saved some money each month.

I went to night school.

Then I bought a motorbike.

Now I am a “pehn-pehn” driver.

I give rides on my pehn-pehn.

I take children to school.

I take big people too.

I take them to work.

It is hard work.

But it is better to work than sitting and begging.

All my passengers like the way I ride.

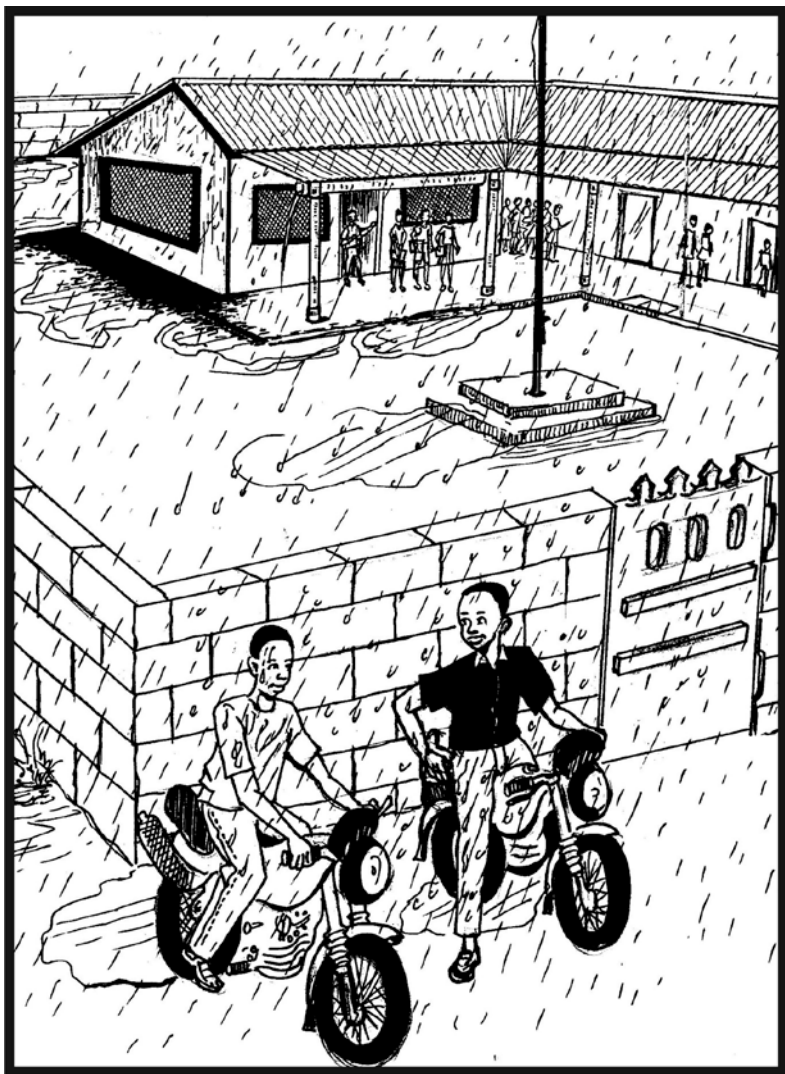
I treat them well.

The boys and girls call me “Pehn-Pehn Ben”.

Some of the adults call me Pehn-Pehn Ben too.

I take them to where they want to go.

THE END



Ben Rides in the Rain

It is raining.

Ben sits on his pehn-pehn.

He sits at the school gate.

He is wet.

Ben does not leave.

The school bell rings.

School is out.

Ben looks at the gate.

The gate does not open.

The boys do not come out.

The girls do not come out.

Ben sits and waits.

Still the boys and girls do not come out.

“The boys and girls are not coming out,” says Sam.

Sam is his friend.

Sam has a pehn-pehn too.

Sam is waiting too.

“It is the rain,” says Ben.

“The boys do not want to get wet.

The girls do not want to get wet.

I will buy rain coats.

I will wear one in the rain.

I will give one to my passenger.”

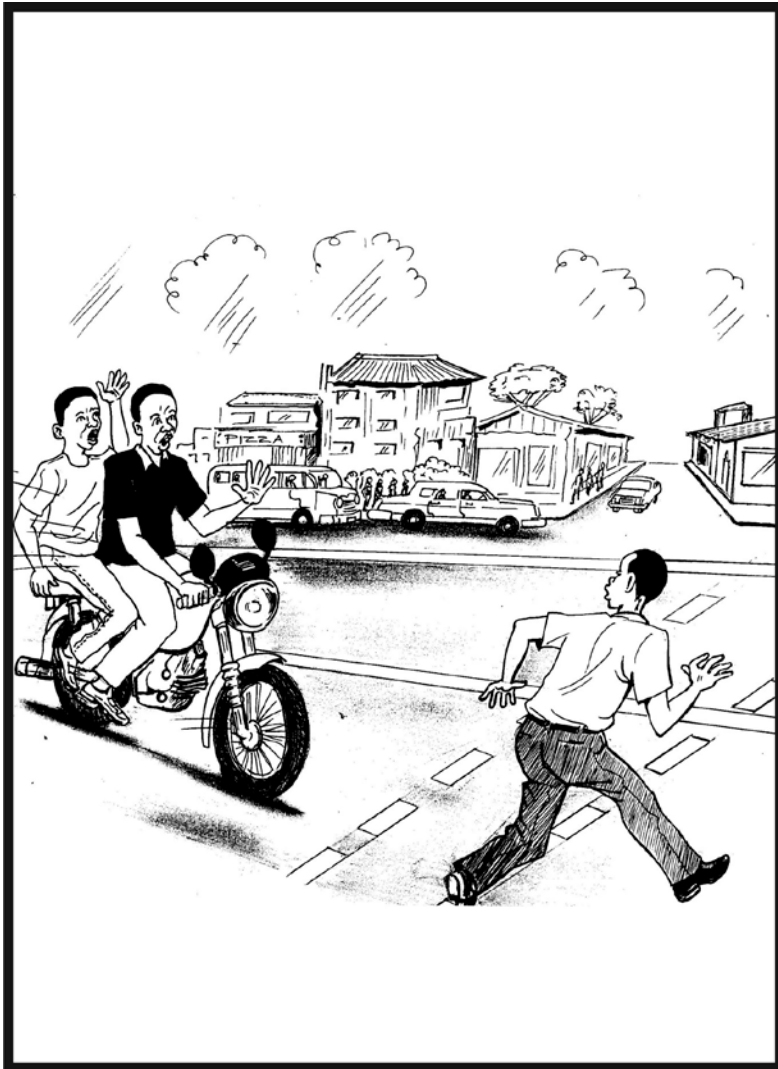
“Yes. That is a good idea,” says Sam.

“I will buy rain coats too.”

“Then we will be dry always,” says Ben.

“Even when we ride in the rain.”

THE END



At the Cross Walk

Ben carries Sam on his pehn-pehn.

Sam's tire is flat. He is going to fix it.

Ben sees a man at the cross walk.

The man wants to cross the road.

Ben stops his pehn-pehn.

"Do not stop," says Sam. "We are late."

"That man wants to cross," says Ben.

"Do not stop. He will run when he sees you," says Sam.

Ben is not happy with Sam.

He stops his pehn-pehn.

“Look at the white lines across the road,” he says to Sam.

Sam looks at the road. He sees the white lines.

“The name of those lines is ‘cross walk’,” says Ben.

“People stand there when they want to cross.”

“For true?”

“Yes,” says Ben.

“But this is a pehn-pehn. It is not a car,” says Sam.

“Pehn-pehn drivers do not stop.”

Ben responds. “That is wrong.

It is a traffic rule. All drivers should obey.

I am a driver. I drive a pehn-pehn,” says Ben.

“Do not be angry,” says Sam. “You are right.

I am in a hurry. That is why I told you not to stop.”

“We should always obey the traffic rules,” says Ben.

Ben starts his pehn-pehn. He drives on.

Sam is quiet.

They drive on and on.

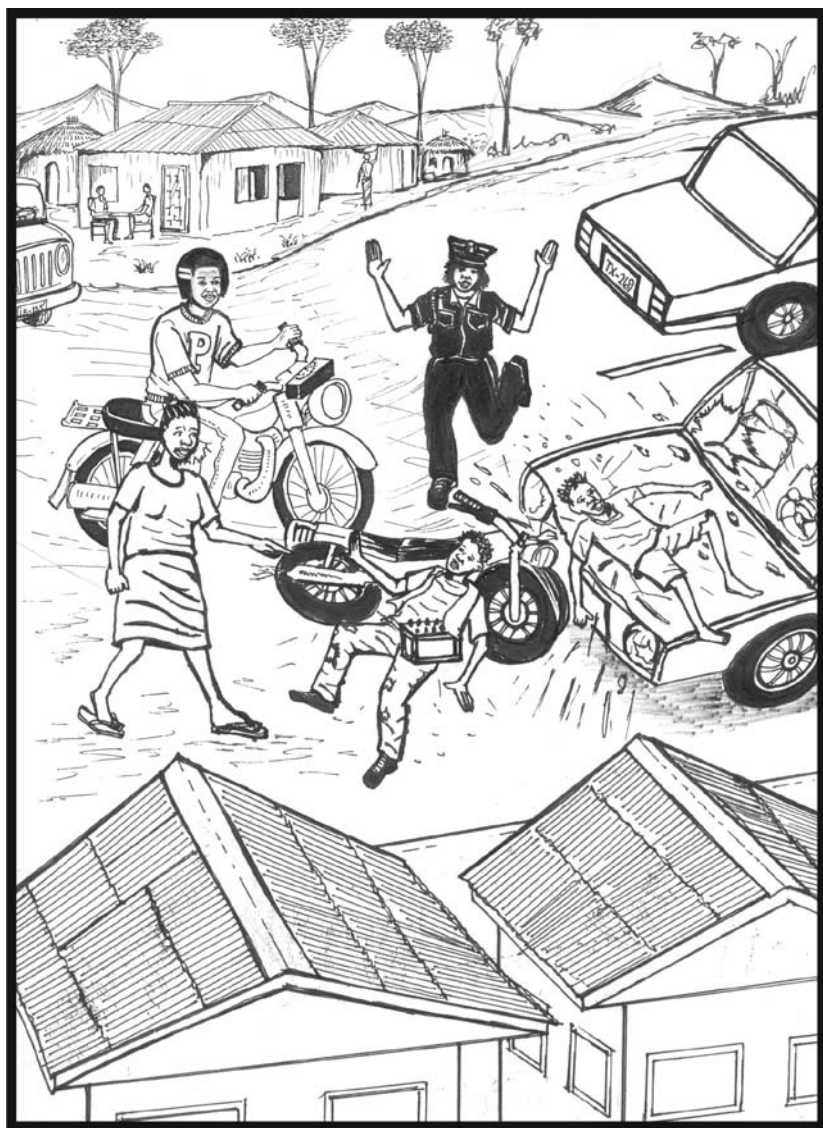
They see a cross walk.

A girl stands at the cross walk.

“Stop the pehn-pehn,” says Sam.

“That girl wants to cross the road.”

THE END



Pehn-Pehn Ben and the Man with Hard Times

Elizabeth climbs the hill.

She has her market bag on her head.

She is a housekeeper.

She works with a nice family.

She has been with them for many years.

The bag is heavy on her head.

There are palm nuts in the bag.

There is plantain in the bag.

There is fish in the bag.

She is almost back at the house.

She can see the house now.

She sees her boss man's car.

She sees two men near her boss man's car.

One of them is on a pehn-pehn.

The other man stands near the car.

He is doing something under the open hood of the car.

She thinks they are fixing the car.

Bu they are wearing helmets.

Then she sees the man take the car battery.

He puts it under his clothes.

“Rogue! Rogue! Rogue!” she shouts.

She shouts at the top of her voice.

The men are afraid.

They jump on the pehn-pehn with the battery.

They start to ride away.

Elizabeth drops her bag.

She runs toward the men.

She tries to catch them

She falls down.

She gets up and shouts,

“Boss man! The rogues are stealing your
battery!

Rogue! Rogue! Rogue!” she shouts over and
over.

Her voice sounds very loud in the street.

One more bike comes by.

“Stop!” shouts Elizabeth.

“Where are you going?” asks the driver.

Elizabeth jumps on the pehn-pehn. She sits
behind the driver.

“Follow that pehn-pehn!” she shouts.

“Those people are rogues! They stole my boss man’s car battery.”

The driver pulls off with Elizabeth.

Her heart beats fast. She does not like to ride pehn-pehn.

She is afraid of pehn-pehns.

“Take time, pehn-pehn boy,” she says.

“Don’t be afraid,” the rider says to her.

He speeds behind the rogues.

He goes very fast.

Elizabeth is afraid. She keeps her eyes closed.

Her head tie flies off her head.

The driver keeps on speeding.

“Don’t be afraid,” he says. “We will catch the rogues.”

The pehn-pehn seems to be flying now.

Elizabeth begins to cry. She is very afraid.

“Stop!” she shouts.

“What?” the driver asks. He does not stop.

“I said stop your pehn-pehn!” she shouts again.

“Don’t be scared. We will soon catch them,” the driver says.

Then they hear a loud sound.

The thieves have had an accident.

They hit another car.

They fly into the air.

They fall on top of the car.

Then they roll off the car

and fall to the ground.

They try to get up to run.

But they cannot. They are hurt.

Elizabeth jumps off the pehn-pehn.

She runs to them.

“Rogue! Rogue! Rogue!” she shouts.

She holds the man by his shirt.

“This man is a rogue! This battery belongs to my boss man!

He just stole it! I saw him with my two eyes!”

Two police women come. Elizabeth tells them her story.

The driver points to the man with the battery.

“This man gave me money to carry him,” says the driver.

“I did not know that he is a rogue. He took the battery.

I thought it was his car. I thought it was his battery.

The woman saw us. She began to shout. I was afraid. I ran away.”

“Please feel sorry for me. I am not a rogue,” says the other man.

“My wife is very sick. I need money to pay the doctor.

I do not have money. I took the battery to sell.

I cannot let my wife die.” He bends down.

He holds the feet of the police. He begs and cries.

“Take the battery,” he says. “Feel sorry for me. I’m not a rogue.”

“Leave my foot! Get up! Rogue!” shouts the policeman.

“I am not a rogue!” the man cries. “Hard times made me do it.”

“So you will steal? So you will break the law?” asks the policeman.

That will not solve your hard times. It will make it worse.

“Let us go. You are going to the station.”

“Aye God, my wife will die,” the man cries.

Elizabeth feels sorry for the man.

“Please leave him,” she says

“No. The man broke the law,” says the police.

“Please bring your boss man to the police station.

I want to talk with him.”

He gets on the criminal's pehn-pehn.

The criminal sits there too.

The policeman drives away with the criminals.

Elizabeth gets on the pehn-pehn.

The other police man is with her. The policeman carries the battery

They meet her boss. He is near his car.

The hood of the car is open. Some people are around him.

They ask him many questions.

“I don’t know,” he says over and over. He looks very confused.

She goes to her boss man. She gives him the battery.

He is happy to see Elizabeth.

She tells him all that has happened.

“Elizabeth, you are my hero,” says the boss.

“This pehn-pehn driver is the hero,” she tells her boss.

“He chased the rogues. He caught the rogues.”

“Thank you my friend,” the boss man says to the pehn-pehn driver.

“Thank you. You brought my battery back.

You brought Elizabeth back. Thank you plenty.”

“You are welcome,” says the pehn-pehn driver.

“What is your name?” Elizabeth asks.

“My name is Ben. Many people call me Pehn-Pehn Ben,” the man says.

“Thank you for helping. Please take this LD\$500.00,” says the boss man.

““I did not do it for money,” says Pehn-Pehn Ben.

“It is good to help people in trouble.”

He waves to them. He tries to start his pehn-pehn.

The pehn-pehn will not start.

The boss man opens the trunk of his car. He gives Ben a gallon of gas.

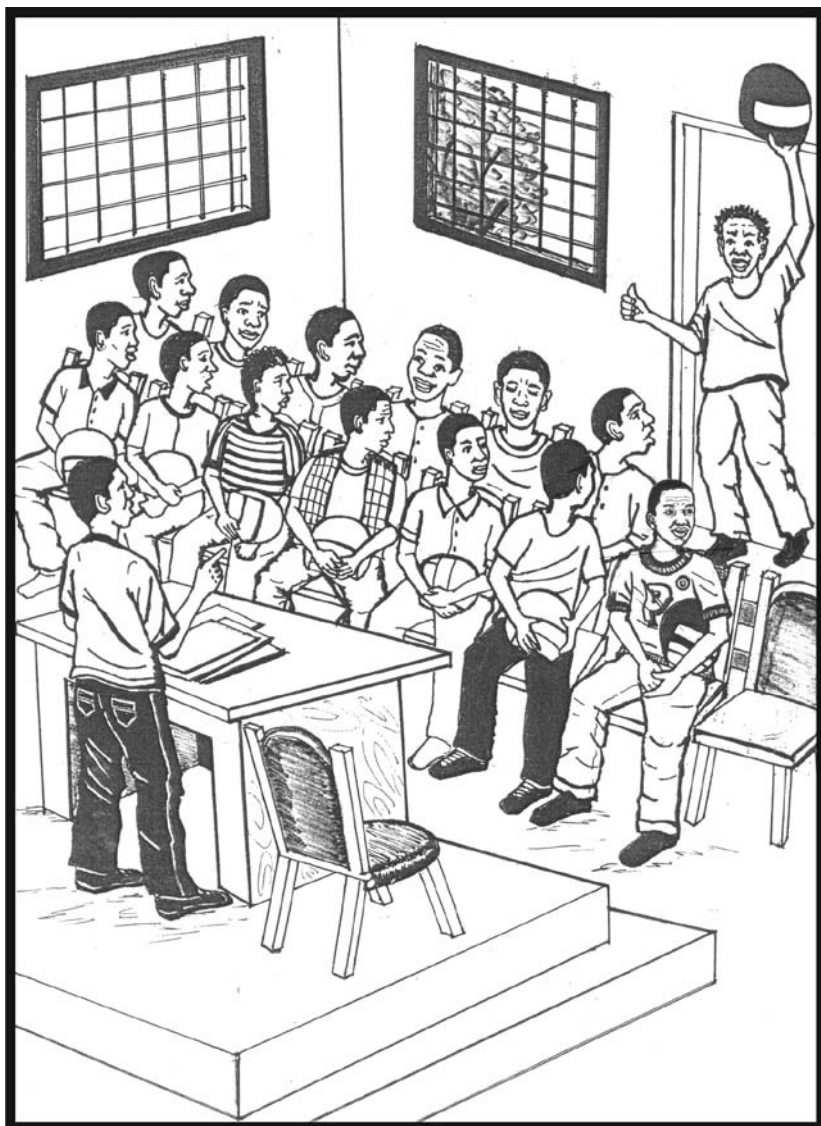
“Thank you,” says Ben.

“Thank you too,” says the boss man.

Pehn-Pehn Ben waves good-bye.

He drives away.

THE END



Pehn-Pehn Ben and Making Choices

It is meeting day.

All the pehn-pehn drivers are meeting.

Pehn-Pehn Ben waits for Sam to pick him up.

Sam is a pehn-pehn driver too.

Sam is his best friend.

They always go with each other to the meeting.

Pehn-Pehn Ben thinks of the first day that he went to the meeting.

The room is filled. The meeting starts.

There is one empty seat next to Ben.

Then a man comes into the room.

He is late for the meeting.

He sees the chair

next to Ben.

He does not sit there.

He picks the chair up.

He takes it to the other side of the room.

His friends are on that side.

Then he sits down.

He talks with his friends.

He makes lots of noise in the meeting.

Pehn-Pehn Ben is angry.

He tells his friend named Sumo.

“He is not a bad man,” Sumo says to Ben.

“He is just noisy. Many people like him.”

The meeting comes to an end.

Sumo and the noisy man go to Pehn-Pehn Ben.

“Ben,” Sumo said. “Please meet my friend.”

“My name is “Crack Head”. Some people also call me “Suicide Bomber,”

the noisy man tells Pehn-Pehn Ben.

Ben shakes his hand. “My name is Ben,” he said.

“Why is your name Suicide Bomber?”

“That is how people call me.

I always have accidents on my pehn-pehn.”

“Do you like that?” Ben asks.

“It is just for fun,” the noisy man says.

“It is not fun when people get hurt,” Pehn-Pehn Ben said.

“But I do not plan it,” the noisy man says.

“He drinks and drives,” another man says.

“Is this true?” Pehn-Pehn Ben asks Suicide Bomber.

“Yes. When I feel cold I drink liquor,” he says.

His friends points to his leg.

“He has scars all over his body.”

“Is this true?” Pehn-Pehn Ben asks Suicide Bomber again.

“Yes. I get hurt when I fall from the pehn-pehn,” he said.

“Do not spoil the name of pehn-pehn drivers,” said Ben.

“Please be careful”.

The meeting ends.

Suicide Bomber tells the other men to follow him to the liquor shop.

“I will buy drinks for all of you,”
he tells them.

Ben comes to the group.

“No,” Ben said. “You are young.

You need to save some money.

You can use your money well.

You can open a table market.

You can open a shop.”

Some people heard what Pehn-Pehn Ben
says.

They start to nod their heads.

They talk to each other.

They agree with Ben.

Suicide Bomber looks around.

No one wants his drinks now.

He feels ashamed.

He said, "My real name is Sam.

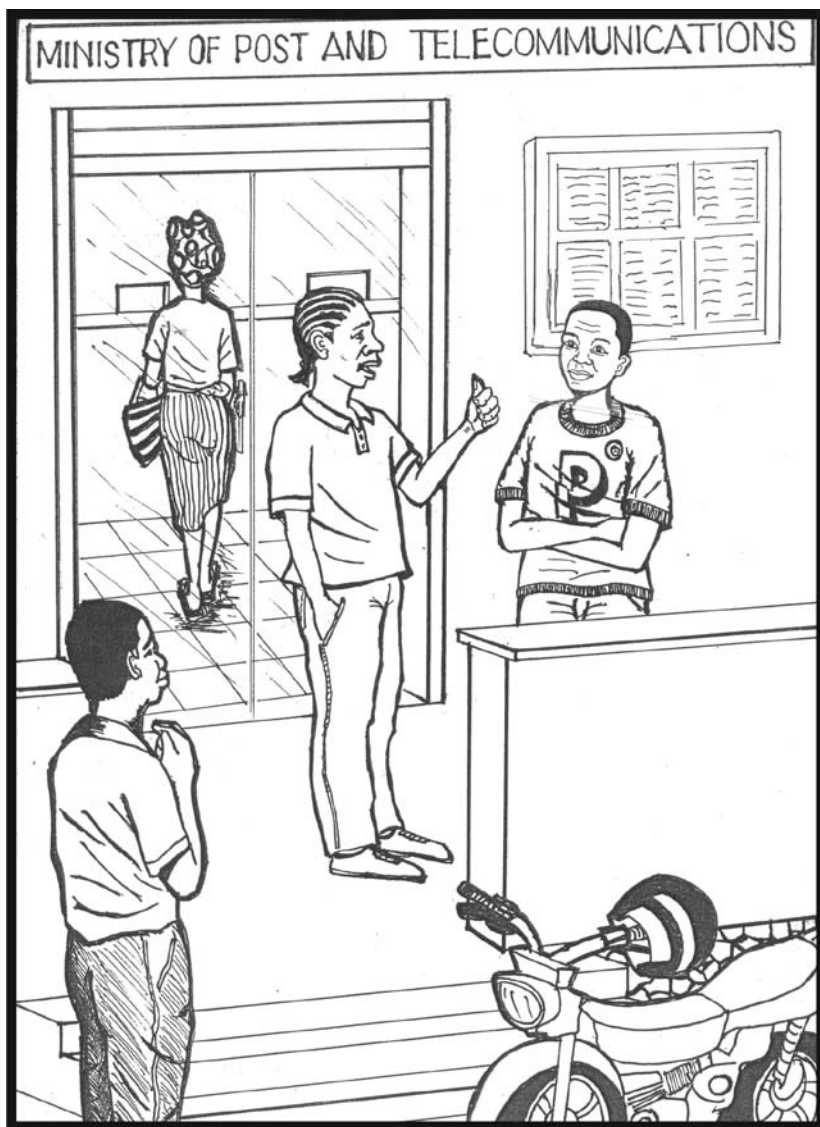
Your ideas are good.

I will change my ways. Thank you."

Everybody claps for Ben and Sam.

Ben left and went home.

THE END



Pehn-Pehn Ben Sees Empty Pride

Pehn-Pehn Ben goes to the post office.

He goes to send a box of dried fish.

Some people stand in the front of the post office.

They are looking at the American Diversity Visa (DV) list.

The list is on the wall.

“Ben! Ben!” he hears someone call.

He looks around. “Is there a fire?” he asks.

“Ben! Ben!” he hears again.

He sees a young man.

The man runs to him.

The man is dressed in jeans and a t-shirt.

His hair is in corn-rows.

He has a small earring in his ears.

He shakes the hand of Ben.

“My man, Ben, how is life?” he asks.

The man tries to talk like an American.

When he says ‘Ben’ it sounds like ‘burn’.

“Hello,” says Pehn-Pehn Ben.

He looks at the man.

The man looks like someone he knows.

“Ben, so you do not know me?” the man asks.

“It is Trokon from Junior High School.”

“T-man!” Ben says. “I did not know you with your hair-do.

I did not know you with your earrings.”

“I do not use that name now,’ says Trokon.

“My new name is Demosthenes. You can call me Demos.”

“Why did you change your name?” asks Ben.

“Trokon sounds too country,” Trokon says.

“That is why I changed it.”

“I will still call you Trokon,” Pehn-Pehn Ben says.

The two men laugh.

“So, what are you doing here?” Pehn-Pehn Ben asks Trokon.

“I will go to America soon,” Trokon says.

“Good!” said Ben. “So your name is on the DV list.”

“No. It is not there.

It will be there next year. I will play DV again.”

“How long have you played DV?” Pehn-Pehn Ben asks.

“Six years now,” Trokon says.

“So what are you doing while you wait to win?” asks Ben.

“Nothing. There are no jobs.

I just need to go. I need to get to America.

Then I will work hard. Then I will make lots of money.

Then I will buy the best car.”

“What about school?” Pehn-Pehn Ben asks.

“Where did you go after Jr. High School?”

“All the schools here are bad” says Trokon

“I will go to school in America.

Then I will get my degree.”

“You have to finish high school first!”

Pehn-Pehn Ben tells him.

Ben looks at Trokon.

“Six years is long to wait for DV,” Pehn-Pehn Ben tells his friend.

“Forget about me. What about you?” Trokon asks Ben.

“I have a pehn-pehn. I work for myself,” says Ben.

“Riding pehn-pehn? Are you not ashamed?”

“Why should I be shame of my pehn-pehn?

The money from it

pays my school fees.

With that money I built my small house,” says Ben.

“For true?” asks Trokon.

“Yes,” says Ben.

“What? I am wasting my time with this DV!”
says Trokon.

“Well,” Pehn-Pehn Ben says.

“You need to work while waiting. Time is
passing.”

“Okay, I hear you. I do need to learn a job.

But please help me with LD\$ 20.00 for now.

I do not have money for a car,” Trokon tells
Ben.

“I only have money for my mail,” Pehn-Pehn
Ben says.

“Ok Ben, it is nice to see you. I will call you
from America.”

Pehn-Pehn Ben feels sorry for Trokon.

Trokon is big and strong.

But he does not want to work. He wants to beg.

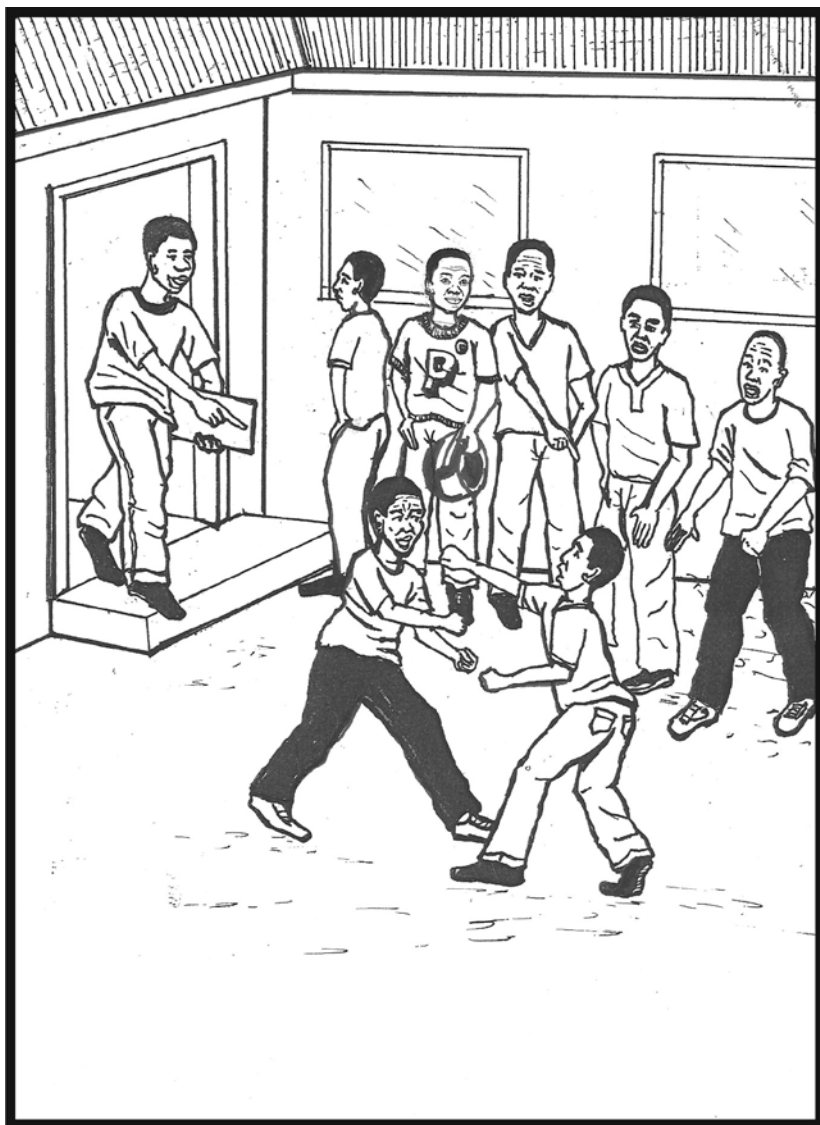
Ben gets on his pehn-pehn.

He rides away. He leaves Trokon behind.

Still sitting and waiting for DV.

Trokon and his empty pride.

THE END



Who Knows You?

Ben's exam was over. School was closed.

Ben read the paper on the wall. He saw a notice for a job.

"I will try this," he says to Sam. Sam is his friend.

"Did you read it well?" asks Sam.

"The place is far. It is out of town"

"I will go there. I will get the job.

I am a good pehn-pehn rider," Ben said.

"What if your pehn-pehn breaks down?" asks Sam.

"I will fix it," says Ben.

"How will you pay for gas?"

"I will find a way," says Ben.

"Do not be afraid. I am not a small boy.

Do not forget. I have run after rogues.

I caught them. My name is all around town.”

“Okay then,” says Sam. “You are my friend.

I want you to be fine.”

“I know,” says Pehn-Pehn Ben.

“Do not worry. I will be okay.”

Two weeks later.

Ben sits by his pehn-pehn. He sits near the road.

He is very far from Monrovia.

The pehn-pehn broke down. He cannot fix it.

Pehn-Pehn Ben sits there for a long time. No car passes.

“I wish I had listened to Sam,” he says.

The trip was bad.

Ben rode to the village on his pehn-pehn.

He reached there at night.

He woke up the next morning.

He went to find the job.

Many other men went to find the same job.

There were rules to follow.

‘No Fighting’ was one of the rules.

They had to wait in line to talk with the boss man.

They waited in the sun.

The sun was hot.

The men grew tired.

The men grew hungry.

The men grew very warm.

Two of them started to fight.

They were stopped.

The two of them were sent out.

The next day was the driving test.

One of the men who had fought was there.

His name was Joseph.

Ben was not happy.

“This is not right,” he said.

“No fighting is a rule here.

That man broke the rule. He should not be here.”

“Why are you here?” asked one man named Zinnah.

“Leave me alone” said Joseph. He wanted to fight Zinnah.

The boss man heard the noise.

He came out of the office.

“What is it?” he asked.

“This man wants to fight me,” said Joseph.

The boss man looked at Zinnah.

“That is bad. You know the rules.

No fighting.

You have to go,” he said.

The boss man looked at Joseph.

“Go and sit down. I will soon call you,” he said.

“But I did not fight!” Zinnah said.

“Go away!” said the boss man.

“No, sir,” Ben said. “Zinnah was not fighting.

It is Joseph who should go away.

“Shut up!” the boss man said to Ben.

“I do not want this job. This place is not fair,” said Ben.

Some of the men laughed at him.

They called him names.

They called him Mr. Human Rights.

They called him Justice Minister.

“This is wrong. You have to speak out,” Ben says.

“If we talk we will not get the job” they said.

“But you have to speak out.

If you see good, say it is good.

If you see bad, say it is bad.

This is our country. We must not spoil it.”

They told Ben, “Joseph is the boss man’s son.

See that other man is Dobliah.

He is the Superintendent’s nephew.

This other man is the boss man girlfriend's brother.

They will get the job."

"So I came here for nothing," said Ben

Ben felt bad. But he got the job.

Work was to start the next day.

He fell ill that night. He could not go to work.

He had no money. One man took him to the hospital.

Ben spent five days in the hospital.

The boss man gave his job to another person.

After 5 days Ben feels better. He wants to go back home.

He gets on his pehn-pehn. He drives out of the village.

But his pehn-pehn breaks down on the road.
He sits on his pehn-pehn. He sits in the sun.
He prays for help. He pushes his pehn-pehn.
He sweats. He is tired. He sits down to rest.
Then he sees a pick-up. It stops for Ben.
It takes him to town.

Ben gets back to Monrovia.

He tells Sam his story. Sam laughs.

"I told you," he says. "You did not listen to me."

"Work with me. We can change our country," says Ben.

"You think so?" asks Sam.

"Yes! If we change ourselves
one by one,
day by day,

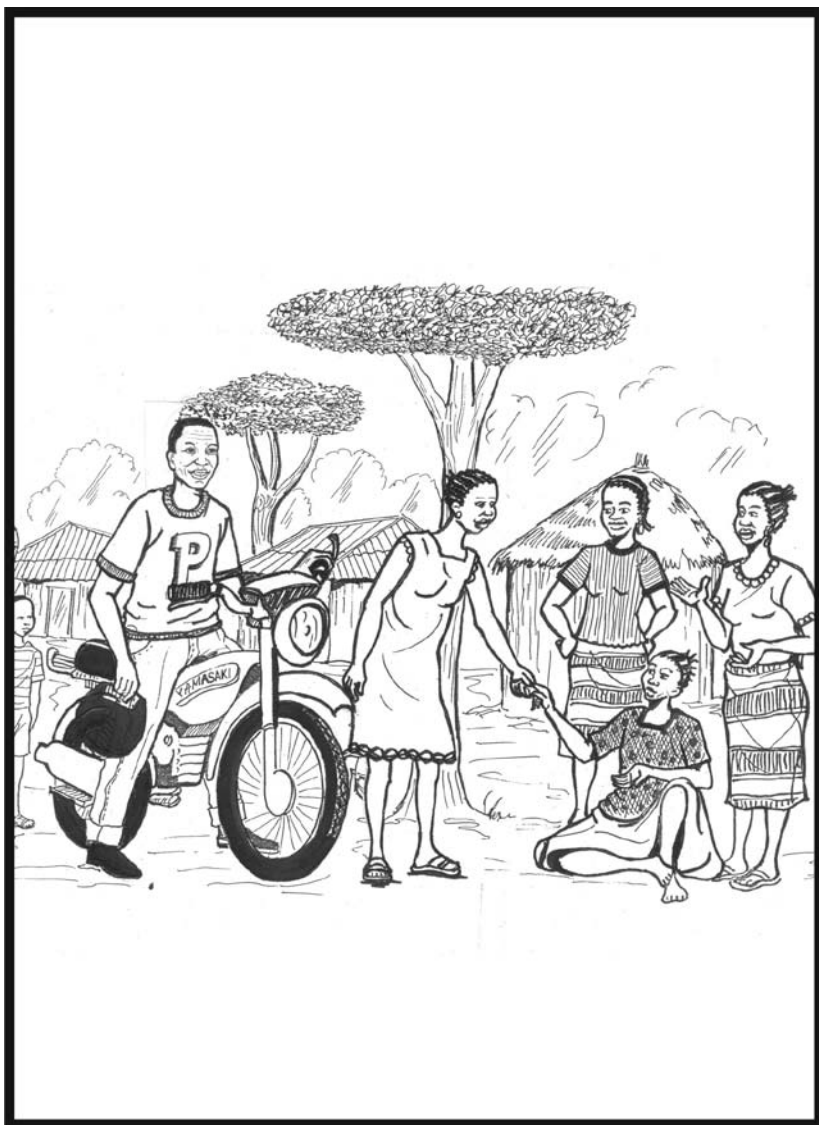
over time, we will change the whole country!"

They plan to work hard.

They plan to be honest.

They plan to live by example.

THE END



Pehn-Pehn Ben, the Peace Maker

Korto yells at her friend Helen.

“You are saying bad things about me!” she says.

She slaps Helen.

Helen falls down.

Korto walks away.

Korto has a frown on her face.

She is not happy. She is angry.

Pehn-Pehn Ben is passing by.

He sees Korto slap Helen.

“Hello,” he says.

Korto does not talk.

“What is your name?” Ben asks.

“Please leave me!” Korto says.

“I saw what you did,” says Pehn-Pehn Ben.

“Is that girl your friend?”

“She is not my friend!” says Korto.

“But why did you slap her?”

“She said bad things about me.”

Pehn-Pehn Ben feels sorry for her.

“I know how you feel,” he says

“But it is not good to fight.

“Cool down. Go and tell her you are sorry.”

“Tell her sorry!” says Korto.

“Yes, sorry” said Ben.

“But why?”

She made you angry. Tell her that.

She made you feel bad. Tell her that.

But you do not have to fight,” says Pehn-Pehn Ben.

Korto turns and looks at Helen.

She sees that Helen is hurt from the fall.

She feels bad.

“Helen is my good friend,” she says.

“I am sorry for slapping her.”

“Go and tell her,” says Pehn-Pehn Ben.

“She will not talk to me.

She is angry with me,” says Korto.

“Just tell her sorry so your side is clear,” says Pehn-Pehn Ben.

“Should I go tell her now?” Korto asks him.

“Yes,” says Pehn-Pehn Ben.

Korto walks back to Helen.

Pehn-Pehn Ben looks at them.

The girls begin to talk.

He cannot hear what they say to each other.

He sees the girls shake hands.

He sees the girls hug each other.

He sees the girls smile at each other.

They are friends again.

The girls call to Pehn-Pehn Ben.

They ask for his name.

“My name is Ben,” he says.

“But people call me ‘Pehn-Pehn Ben.’”

The girls laugh and say,

“You have a new name.

After today you are Pehn-Pehn Ben, the
Peace Maker.”

THE END



Putting First Things First

Nyemah, Korto and Helen sit in a shop.

Korto and Helen drink soft drinks.

Nyemah is too sad to drink.

Exam grades are out. Nyemah did not pass.

Helen failed too but she does not care.

“Don’t feel bad, Nyemah,” Korto says.

“They will give the exams again.

You can study hard. You will pass next time.”

Nyemah cries.

“Why are you crying?” Helen asks.

“This is Liberia. We will find our way.”

“Your parents have money to pay for your school,” says Nyemah.

“My parents are poor. I was on a football scholarship.

I failed so now I will be dropped.”

Nyemah puts his head in his hands. He cries some more.

Pehn-Pehn Ben is passing by.

He sees the three friends. He knows them very well.

He walks into the shop. “Hello,” he says.

“Hello, Pehn-Pehn Ben,” the two girls say.

Nyemah does not speak.

“Why are you crying, Nyemah?

Did someone die?” Ben asks.

Nyemah shakes his head.

“What is wrong with Nyemah?” Pehn-Pehn Ben asks Korto.

Korto tells Pehn-Pehn Ben the news.

“Nyemah, you are a good student,” Pehn-Pehn Ben says.

“What happened?”

“He joined a club last year,” Korto says.

“Now he does not study. He goes to parties.

He goes to football games too.”

“Careful Korto, he will soon cry again,” Helen says.

She laughs at Nyemah.

Do not joke,” Pehn-Pehn Ben says.

“This cannot be true.”

“It is true, Pehn-Pehn Ben,” Korto says.

“I told Nyemah to study hard. He did not listen.

He does not pay attention in class.”

“Is this true, Nyemah?” asks Pehn-Pehn Ben.

“Yes. I did not use my head,” Nyemah says.

“How?” asks Pehn-Pehn Ben.

“I had time to study. But I did not study.”

Helen laughs at Nyemah.

Pehn-Pehn Ben turns to Helen.

“Didn’t you fail too?” he asked her.

“Those people just want ‘cold water’,” Helen says.

“I will pass. You will see. This is Liberia,”

“Helen, that is bad. That is corruption,”
Pehn-Pehn Ben says.

“If you go that way you will suffer.

When you go to get a job you will know
nothing.

Then your boss will fire you!

You have to study hard.

There is time for fun. There is time to study.

You must put first things first.”

“I will try to change.” Nyemah says to Pehn-Pehn Ben.

I will earn money to pay for school.

I will study hard next year.

No more night clubs, no parties every night

I am happy you passed by the shop,

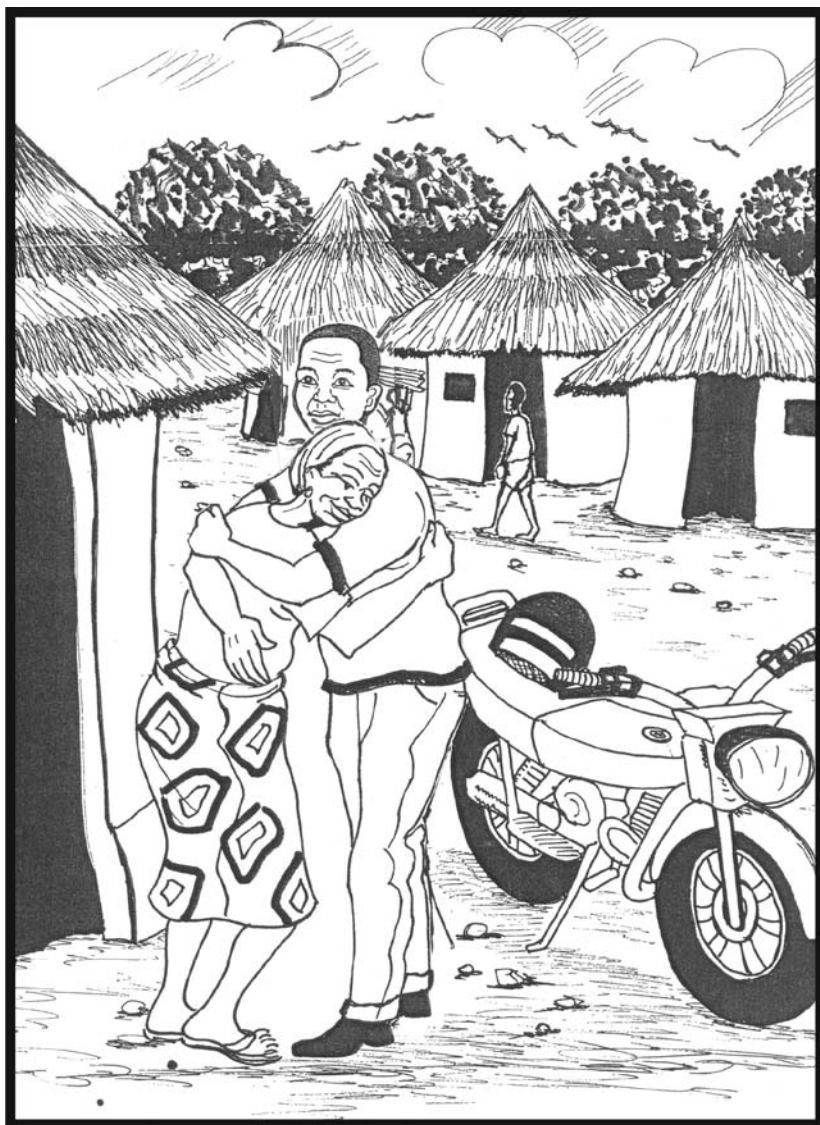
I feel much better. ”

“Me too,” says Helen. “Thank you Pehn-Pehn Ben.

We will study hard. We will pass next time.

We will put first things first.”

THE END



Pehn-Pehn Ben and the Reunion

Pehn-Pehn Ben drives into his village.

He is on his pehn-pehn.

He honks his bike horn as he goes.

He was away for six years. But now the war is over.

The road was closed before. Now the road is open.

He sees Old Man Barjue. He honks his horn.

He waves to some people.

They are standing in front of the old school.

Then he reaches his grandmother's house.

His parents died when he was very young.

His grandmother Nay-Goe raised him.

His grandmother was good to him.

His grandmother was kind.

His grandmother was strong.

His grandmother was always happy.

She loved him very much.

She trained him as a child

to become a helpful, kind adult.

But she sent him to Monrovia because of the war.

A car was going to Monrovia.

It was the last car to leave the village.

She put him in the car.

“Come with me, Grandmother,” Ben cried that day.

“I do not want to leave you behind.”

She told him, "You go in front. There is no space in the car," she told him.

"I will follow you soon. I will find you."

But she never reached Monrovia.

The road closed that day. It closed for six years.

Then he stayed in Monrovia.

Now he is home.

He honks his horn. He gets off his pehn-pehn.

The door opens slowly. An old lady opens the door.

She is wearing torn clothes.

He does not know her. Then he looks at her closely.

It is his grandmother.

She is not like before. She is not strong.

She does not look happy.

“Nay-Goe!” he says.

“Who is that?” she asks. She is almost blind.

“It is your son. It is Ben. I am home,”

He runs to her. He hugs her.

“Ben? Is that you?

Now I can die in peace!” she says.

They hold each other for a long time.

Tears of joy roll down their faces.

Nay-Goe cooks fufu and soup for him.

Ben helps make the fire. He helps cook the fufu.

They eat the nice meal. Ben takes a hot bath.

Then he and his grandmother sit to talk.

Ben tells her all he has done in six years.

“I am happy for you,” she tells him.

“How about you, Nay-Goe?

How is life with you?” he asks.

“Soldiers came here the day you left.

They drove us away,” she says.

“We stayed in the bush for a long time.

The soldiers took all our things.

We came back to nothing.

Thank God this house was not burned down.

Other houses were burned.

We came back. We started life over.”

“I tried to make the farm. It was not easy.

My eyes are getting blind.

One day, I stepped on a big snake.

So the village council tried to help me.
They gave me a husband.
They said that man would farm for me.
He would set my nets. He would set my traps.
He would cut my wood.
But one thing. I have to give him all my land.
I was getting blind. I did not hear from you.
I did not know if you were alive.
So I agreed. I married Glee-gee."

"Glee-gee!" shouts Ben.
"The village drunk? That is your husband?
Is that the help of the town council?"
"I know, my son. I am not happy.
I did not know what to do," says Nay-Goe.
"Glee-gee can drink plenty liquor.

He cannot help himself," says Ben.

"How can he help you?

The town council fooled you.

"Where is Glee-gee now?" he asks.

"He is at his 3rd woman's house,"

"Lazy Glee-gee? He has three wives?

Does he have money for three wives?" Ben asks.

"He is selling my land," Nay-Goe says.

"That land was yours." Ben shouts. She begins to cry.

"When I tell him to stop selling the land....."

"What!?" asks Ben. "Does he beat you?"

Nay-Goe does not answer him.

"His new wife does not like me.

She says that I am a witch,” she says.

“She runs the farm. She does not want to see me there.

My own farm!” Nay-Goe cries.

“Don’t cry. I am here now.” Ben tells his grandmother.

They stay up all night. They make their plans.

They pack Nay-Goe’s things.

They leave very early the next day
before day break.

All the other villagers are still in bed.

Ben ties his grandmother’s things on his pehn-pehn.

He locks up her house. He drives her to the car park.

He puts her in the first car to Monrovia.

He rides behind the car on his pehn-pehn.

He takes her to a good hospital.

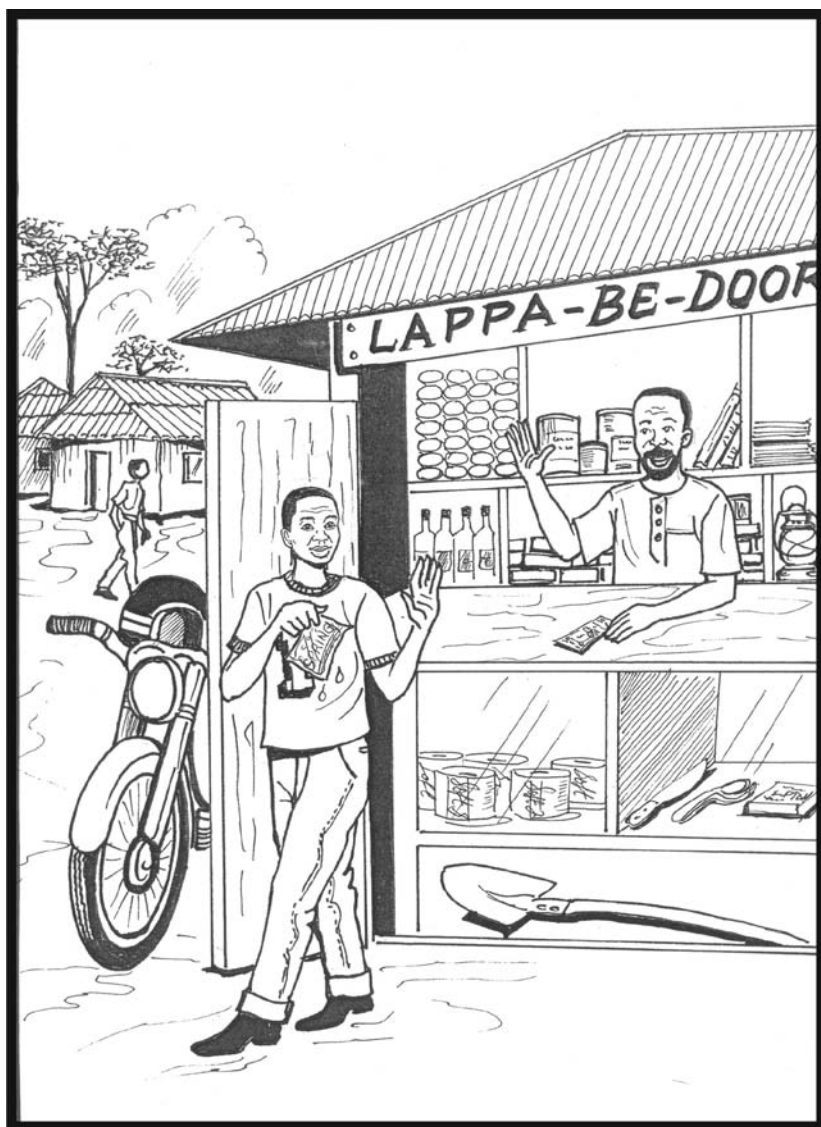
He gives her his bed in his room. He sleeps
on the floor.

Soon, she gets well. She grows strong again.

Then Pehn-Pehn Ben goes back to the village.

He goes to deal with the village council and
Glee-gee.

THE END



Pehn-Pehn Ben Knows We Are One

The sun is very hot.

Pehn-Pehn Ben rides his bike.

He goes to a shop. The shop has a name.

It is called 'Lappa-be-Door'. He gets off his pehn-pehn.

He goes into the shop.

"Please give me cold water," he says to the shop keeper.

"How many bags?" asks the shop keeper.

"One," says Penh-Penh Ben.

The shop keeper gives the water to him.

Pehn-Pehn Ben takes the bag of cold water.

Pehn-Pehn Ben gives him ten dollars.

“Thank you” he says to the shop keeper.

“You are welcome” the shop keeper says.

“This is your change.”

Pehn-Pehn Ben takes the change.

He goes back to his pehn-pehn.

He rides away.

He meets a boy.

The boy sells candies.

Pehn-Pehn Ben stops.

He buys some candies.

He takes the change from the shop.

It is ten dollars.

It should be five dollars.

The shop keeper made a mistake!

Pehn-Pehn Ben drives back to the shop.

“Hello,” says the shop keeper.

“Do you want more water?”

“I do not want water,” says Pehn-Pehn Ben.

“I have your money.”

“My money?” asks the shop keeper.

“Yes,” says Ben. “I gave you ten dollars.

You gave me ten dollars back. I have five dollars for you”

“Oh, thank you,” says the shop keeper. His eyes are wide open.

“You are a good man!”

Pehn-Pehn Ben rides away.

The next day, Pehn-Pehn Ben sees a woman.

She has a bag of rice.

She gets on his pehn-pehn.

The rice bag has a hole.

The rice begins to fall out.

“My house is not far.

I have a good bag. I can give it to you,” says Pehn-Pehn Ben.

“Let us go there,” says the woman. “All my rice is wasting.”

They get to Ben’s house. The woman sees a picture.

It is on the wall. A woman is in the picture.

“Is this old lady Nay-Goe?” she asks.

“Yes. Do you know her?” asks Pehn-Pehn Ben.

“Yes. She is my auntie,” the woman says.

“She is my grandmother,” says Ben

“So, you are my family!” says the woman.

“My name is Gorpue.”

“My name is Ben,” he says. They laugh.

They tell each other about their family.

They are happy.

Pehn-Pehn Ben takes Gorpue to her house.

She tells Ben to stop.

They get to a shop. The shop has a name.

It is called ‘Lappa-be-Door’.

“I live here,” she says. “This is my shop.”

“I know this shop” he tells Gorpue.

“I bought water from here. The shopkeeper made a mistake.”

“He told me about that,” says Gorpue. “So you are the one.

You came back with the change.

He spoke well of you. Come and meet him.

He is your family.”

Pehn-Pehn Ben laughed.

“We are one in this country,” he says.

“Yes,” says Gorpue. “You are right.

Do not act bad to someone.

He might be your brother.

Do good to others. They might be your relatives.

We are one.”

THE END



Pehn-Pehn Ben and the Little Girl Seller

Ben drives into his yard.

“Please come Ben,” says Ma Sarah.

“Come and hear this.

My niece is pregnant.

She was sick for a long time.

So I sent her to the doctor.

The doctor says that she is pregnant.

This is bad news for me.

Her mother will be sad.

Her father will be sad.

She is in school.

She helps me in the house.

She helps me to sell.

Now she is pregnant.

This is bad news for me.”

Ma Sarah is angry.

“Who is the baby’s pa?” Ben asks Ma Sarah.

“I do not know,” Ma Sarah said. “But you can ask her.”

“Who is the baby’s pa?” Ben asks the girl.

Wehmah bent her head. She did not talk.

“You better talk!” shouts Ma Sarah.

“You are not a small girl now. You are pregnant.

You are a big girl. You better talk!”

“Do not yell at her like that,” said Ben,

“She will be afraid. She may run away.

She may try to harm the baby.”

“But I am just too angry with this girl,” say
Ma Sarah.

“I know,” says Ben.

“Do you have a boyfriend?” he asks the girl.

“Yes, Uncle,” she says.

“Where does he live?”

“Not too far, Uncle. I know the place.”

“Good. You will take me there.”

“Okay, Uncle.”

“Thank you Ben. Thank you for the help.

You are a good friend,” Ma Sarah says.

The next day Ben picks up Wehmah.

Wehmah gets on his pehn-pehn.

They drive off.

“Inside there,” Wehmah points to an old school house.

“The displaced center?” asks Ben

“Yes, Uncle.”

Ben is not happy. He knows the place.

Many bad boys live there.

“I sell here,” Wehmah says to Ben.

Pehn-Pehn Ben and Wehmah walk into the place.

They see four young men playing Ludo.

“There he is. He is the one,” Wehmah says.

She points to one of the boys.

“What?” asks the young man.

Do I know you?” he asks. Two of his friends begin to laugh.

But the other friend speaks up.

“This is the donut girl” he says “so it is now that you do not know her?”

I told you that the girl was still small.

I told you to leave her alone. But you did not leave her.

Now you say that you do not know her.”

The young man tries to run away.

Pehn-Pehn Ben holds him.

“Please, I am sorry,” the young man says.

He is very afraid.

“It was the work of the devil. Please feel sorry for me.”

Pehn-Pehn Ben is very angry.

He takes the man to the police station.

The police hold him for rape. He is put into jail.

Pehn-Pehn Ben feels sorry for Wehmah.

The young man did bad to her.

Now her Aunty is angry with her.

Ben was angry with Ma Sarah. She was to blame too.

She should know better.

“Children should go to school and play,”

Pehn-Pehn Ben says to himself.

“They should not sell in the street.”

“I will talk to Ma Sarah,” Pehn-Pehn Ben says.

“She should not treat children like this.

No one should treat children like this.”

He gets on his bike.

He rides to Ma Sarah's house.

THE END