



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



From Our Own Mouths:
OUR LIFE, OUR CULTURE



Stories for Liberian Youth
by Liberian Learners, Teachers, Principals
in USAID/CESLY Alternative Basic Education

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. In response to this need, the mini-series on the life of Sonie was commissioned by the USAID/CESLY project.

It is not only a culture of reading that needs to be developed in Liberia but also a culture of writing. For this reason, on September 8, 2010 USAID/CESLY launched a Writing Contest to stimulate creative writing among thousands of alternative basic education and accelerated learning students. Teachers and principals also participated in the contest.

The stories featured here represent the highlights of the stories gathered from Bong, Nimba, Lofa, Grand Gedeh and Maryland counties. The stories have been edited and collated into three main sections. "My Life" contains

personal narratives where youth have recounted their own life experiences and what they learned. “My Friends” contains fictional and non-fictional accounts of the stories of male and female Liberian Youth. “My Culture” contains traditional stories, legends and tales from across Liberia.

Many of the stories convey a certain moral or theme. Authors have wanted to let other youth learn lessons about life through the telling of the stories. The themes highlighted in this reader cover themes such as: the value of hard work and perseverance, the value of education, respect for elders, gender equality, overcoming disability, the impact of greed, and many other topics.

These stories are 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.

These stories, while written by students and teachers, are illustrated by Saye Dahn.

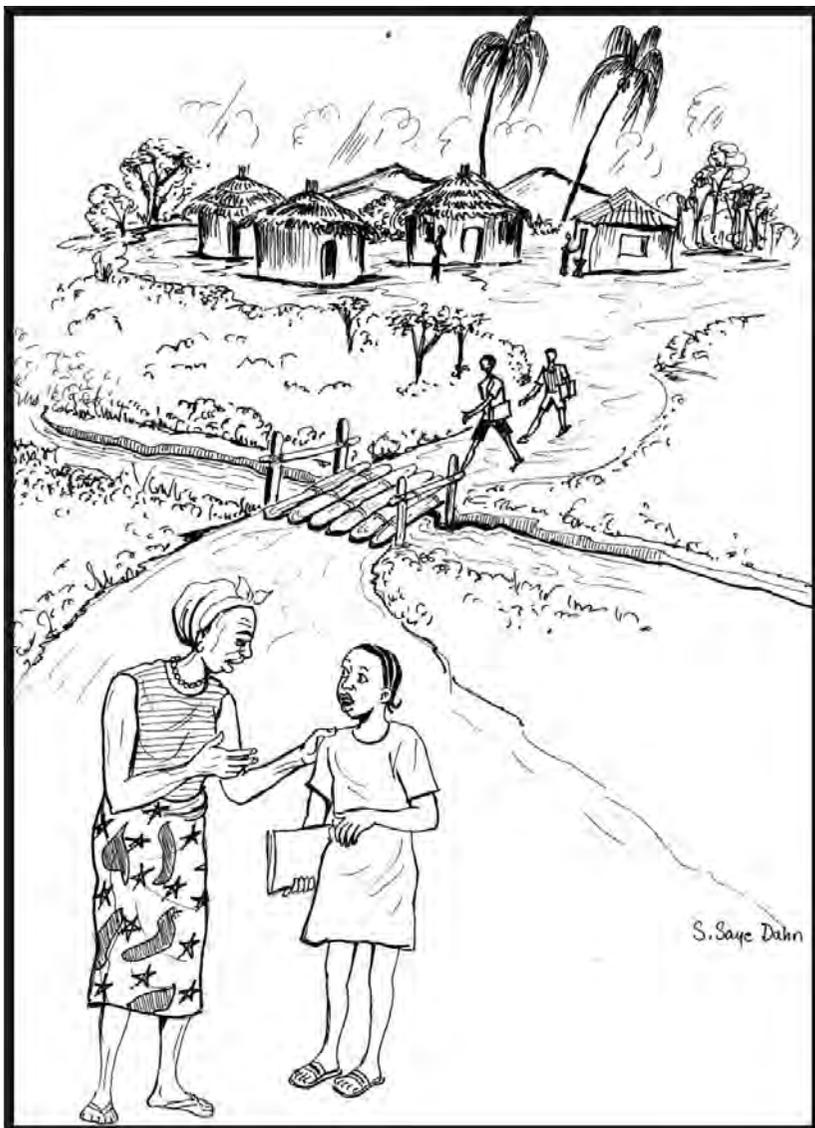
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MY LIFE



Coming to School

By Marthaline Pyne

Accelerated Learning Level 3 Student, Nimba County

My school is far from our village. I walk for about 3 hours before I get to my school. I wake up by 5:00 in the morning to get ready for school. I fetch water and wash the dishes before coming to school.

My mother died while giving birth to me. So I do not know what she looked like. There is no picture of her. I live with my grandmother. She is kind to me.

There is a creek between our school and my village. During the dry season, we cross the creek on foot. During the rainy season, the creek is full. We use the canoe to cross the river. We take off our uniforms and slippers and tie them up in a plastic bag. We put our books in the bag too, but sometimes they get wet. We used big leaves as umbrellas. The leaves are soft and when the rain is heavy, the leaves get spoiled and we get wet.

My grandma has no money. She gives me plantain or cassava to eat. I roast it and take it to school for my

recess. Some of my friends have nothing to eat so I share with them. Sometimes, the older boys take the cassava or plantain away from us by force and we cry and have nothing to eat. We report to the teacher, but nothing is done to the boys. This makes my grandma sad.

After school, I walk for another 3 hours back to my village. I am tired, but I have to walk for another one or two hours from the village to the farm to help my grandmother with the farm work. I help to “scratch” the farm and plant rice.

Grandmother sets out baskets to get fish. We always have fish to eat. Grand mother says fish is good. I asked her why but all she says is, “fish is good”. After school, there is always a nice bowl of soup and rice waiting for me.

When I I dash my books on the ground and go straight for the pots. I have no bowls, grandmother keeps my food in the cooking pots.

After I have eaten, I help grandmother with the work. When we sit down to rest, she looks in my copybooks, but she cannot read. I read and tell her what we

did in school. She tries to read after me, but she makes mistakes and we laugh together. Late in the evening, we collect firewood and go home to our village. I am so tired and fall asleep. Grandmother wakes me up by 5:00 the next morning to get ready for school.

Sometimes, I think about my mother and I cry. Grandmother wipes my face and tells me not to cry. She tells me to be serious and go to school and I will live a better life.

END



S. Saye Dahn

Me and My Twin Sister

By Tupee Kamara,

Accelerated Learning Level 3 Student, Montserrado County

My name is Tupee. I have a sister; her name is Tutu. We are twins and look alike. We wear the same kind of clothes. Many people do not know who is Tupee and who is Tutu. Our teacher does not know the difference. He calls me Tutu and my sister Tupee. We laugh when he makes mistakes. In class Tutu gets punished for what I do and I sometimes get punished when she does something bad.

We look alike, but we think differently. Our mother wants us to be honest. She is not happy when we play tricks on people. She says if we continue to do that, people will not trust and respect us.

I like to go out and make friends, but Tutu likes to sit all by herself and read or listen to music. I want to be a journalist when I grow up and finish my school. Tutu wants to be nurse. We both want to work hard and study our lessons so that we will achieve our goals.

Our mother says it is not enough to have a plan. She says it is important to work hard to make sure your plan or dream comes true. She says we will need to be patient. Take it easy, easy. Tutu and I laugh when she says 'easy easy' because mother really likes to say those words. Whether working on the farm, cooking or washing clothes, she would say "Take it easy, easy."

Our mother says when she was a little girl in elementary school, she wanted to be a pilot. But she dropped out of school because of pregnancy and did not have the chance to go back to school. We laugh each time we see a plane flying over and say, "Mom, that is you flying the plane?"

Mother laughs too. "If I had finished school and had the chance, I would be flying a plane today; but here I am planting cassava in the hot sun. Since I could not do that, I want you to do something good with your lives." There are tears in mother's eyes, but she does not want us to know she is crying. We feel sorry for mother and stop laughing.

Anytime we see a plane in the air we think about our mother. We think about our own plans too. We want to be successful in life.

END



Aunty Esther's Porch

By Pauline Nyandeh

Accelerated Learning Level 3 Student, Maryland County

During the war, our school was burnt down by some unknown persons. There were many children in our village. We had nowhere to go to school. A woman called Aunty Esther decided to start a small school for us on her porch. We were so many and Aunty Esther found it hard teaching us. Some of the children made a lot of noise, while others fought among themselves and cried. Aunty Esther told us to sit on the floor with our legs crossed and be quiet.

We had no clothes and shoes. We were barefoot. We wore our mothers and father's shirts or blouses. The clothes were big and long and served as shirts and trousers at the same time.

Some of the children were malnourished and sick. Some had running nose and sore eyes or "Apollo." There were a lot of flies. But we came to school every day and wanted to learn.

There was no blackboard or chalk. Aunty Esther used charcoal to write on a piece of old ceiling tile. She wrote letters and numbers. She pointed to them with a stick and we said it after her as if we were a choir of small parrots. We did not know the letters and numbers but we recited them.

My friend Gertrude could not see well. She had problems with her eyes. So I helped her to write the letters and numbers.

As for me, I could not hear well. My father would hold me by my ears and lift me up when I did something wrong. This was very painful. He did it over and over. This hurt my ears.

Gertrude and I sat close to each other. I helped Gertrude to write and she helped me to read. We did not join the other children to make noise or fight. We listened to Aunty Esther.

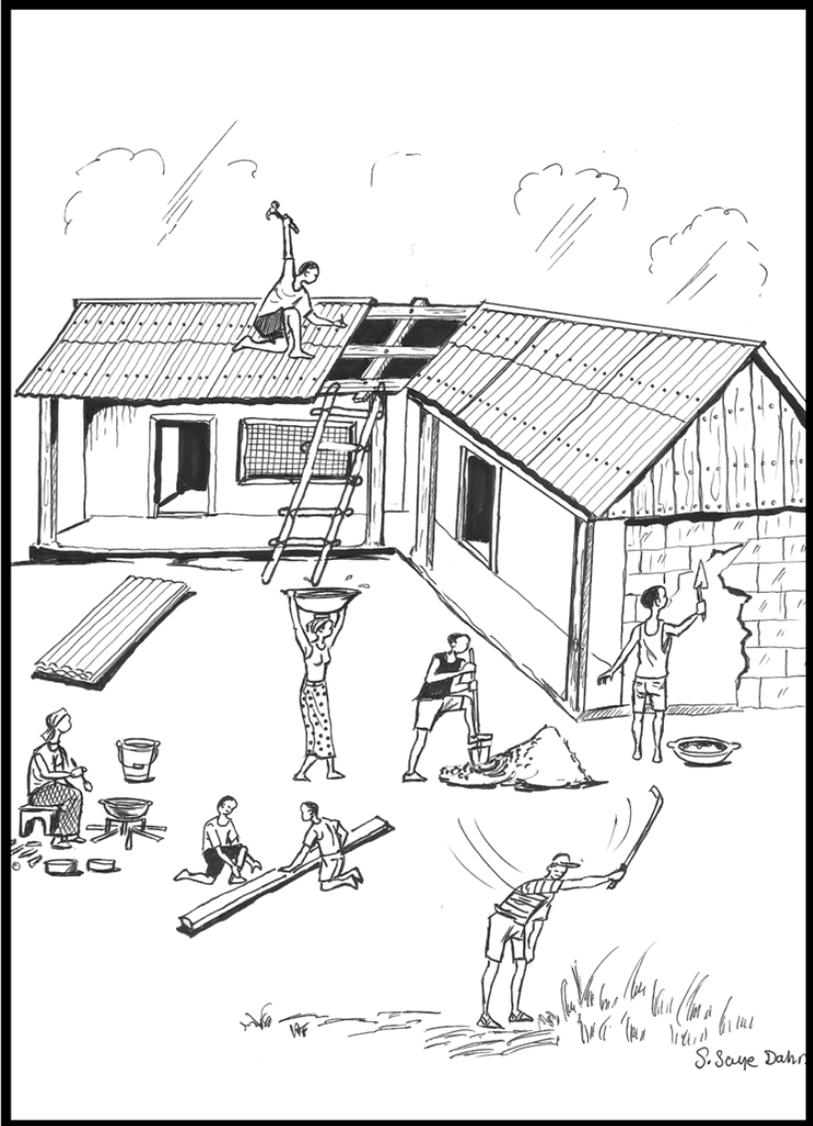
One day, the community people called a meeting and decided to build a school. The school was built of dirt

bricks and thatch. The benches were made of sticks tied together.

We loved Aunty Esther and her porch. Aunty Esther was patient with us. She was the first person to teach us how to read and write.

Gertrude and I are now in Level 3 of accelerated learning class. When we finish school, we want to be teachers. We want to be like Aunty Esther to help boys and girls learn how to read and write.

END



Working Together

By Bloh Sackie

Accelerated Learning Level 3 Student, Maryland County

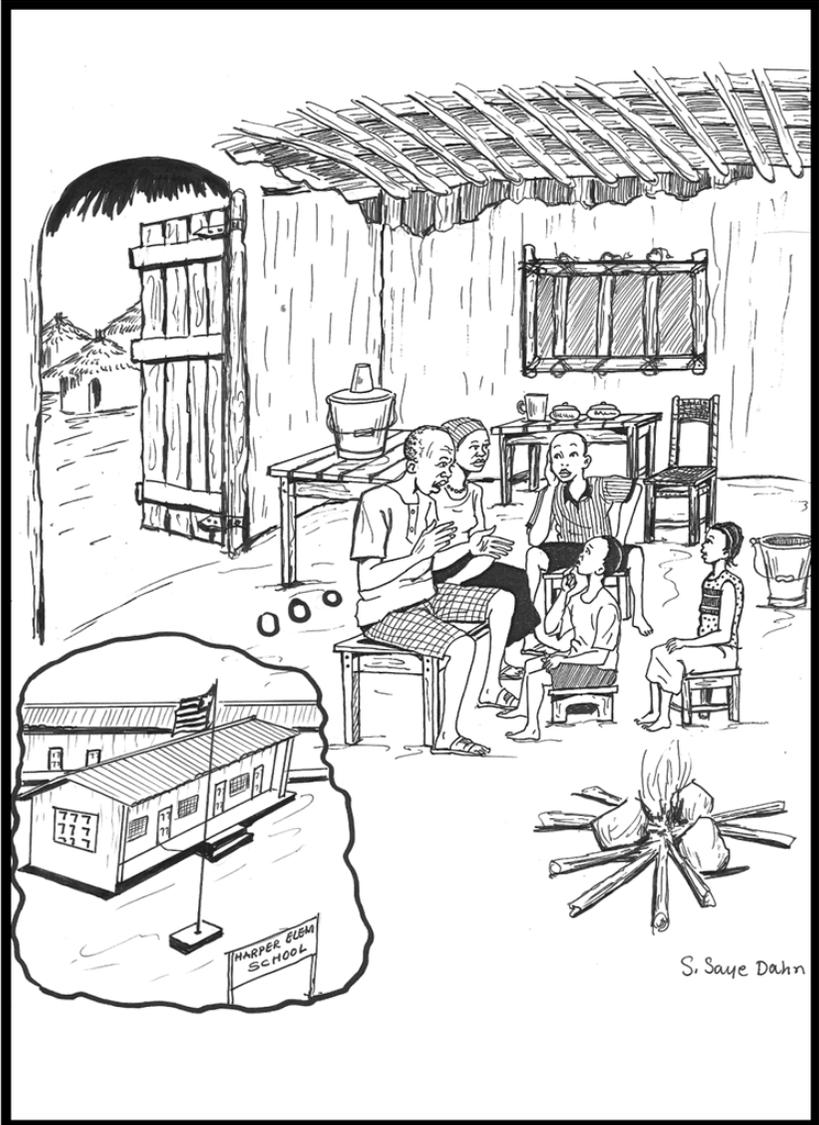
My name is Bloh. I live in Norh Village. I go to Norh Public School. But the school has no roof, windows, doors and chairs. When it rains there is water on the floor. Goats and chickens wander through, leaving sickness behind them. We told our parents about the problem. They had a meeting and decided build a new school.

The men brought the sticks and thatch from the bush. The women dug out the dirt. The children brought water to mix the dirt. After a week, the school house was finished. We used flat pieces of planks and bamboo for benches. We fenced the school with sticks to stop goats and cows from going in at night.

Now our school does not leak when it rains. Animals do not enter and sleep there. We will protect and take care of it.

We are happy and proud because we built the school ourselves.

END



S. Saye Dahn

Daddy's Decision

By Monbedah Hinneh

Accelerated Learning Level 3 Student

East Harper Community School, Maryland County

My father grew up and went to school in Barrobo, Maryland County. As a young man, growing up in the village, he lacked most of the things other young people of his age enjoyed. He did not have clothes, shoes and enough food to eat. He went hungry many days. He would climb very tall palm trees, cut the palm nuts and make palm oil. He would take the oil to the market on Saturdays, to the market in Karloken. He would carry a nine gallon container of oil on his head for two days before reaching the market. Sometimes, nobody bought the oil and he had to bring it back to his village to take to the market the following Saturday.

When my father finished sixth grade, he had no money to continue his education. He lived in a very rural area, so he became a farmer. Because he was not well educated, he found it difficult to speak good English and express himself well at meetings and other social gathering.

One day, father called a family meeting. He said, "My children, I don't want what happened to me to also happen to you. I stopped in the sixth grade and because of that I am not educated. I have had a hard time in life. I will take you to Harper city so that you can receive a good education."

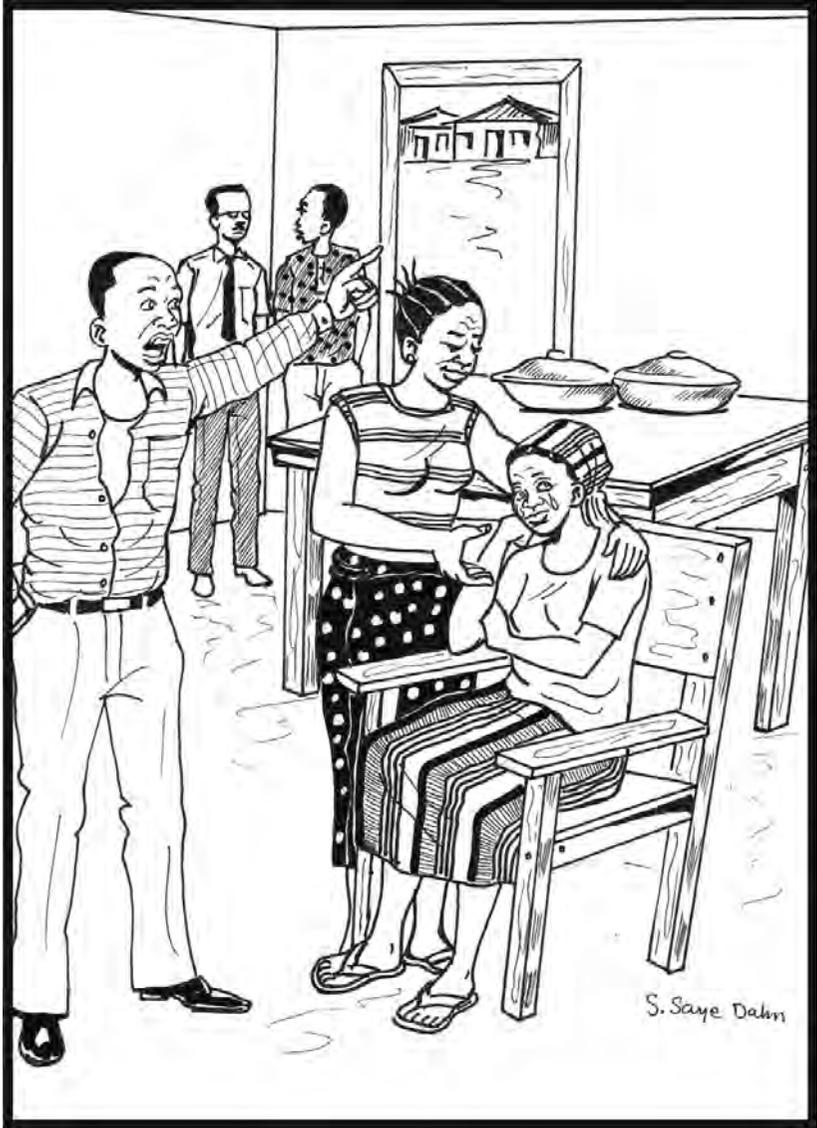
In 2006, our father built a house in Harper and we moved. It was our first time to ride a vehicle. It was raining, the road was bad and the car got stuck many times in the mud.

We finally arrived in Harper and our father enrolled us in the East Harper Elementary School. It was very hard for us as we could not speak English. But as time went by we learned English. We now speak well and make good grades in school.

Now we want to graduate from college and find good jobs. This will make our father very happy and proud. We want to prove that what our father could not do because of poverty, we his children can do.

God bless you, father.

END



My Sister Mai

By Janet Dolo

Accelerated Learning Student 3, Nimba County

I have a sister. Her name is Mai Dolo.

I love my sister. Our parents love my sister very much too. Our parents always allowed Mai to do whatsoever she liked. She did not go on the farm to work. She did not cook and do house work. I did everything. Mai spend most of her time sleeping, visiting friends or watching African movies.

Mai did not go to school every day. In class, Mai liked to sit in the back and talk with other students. When the teacher disciplined her, she would go and report to our father. He would get angry and come to the campus and quarrel with the teacher and threaten to take them to court.

Mai said the lessons were difficult and the teachers did not like her.

One day, we left our village and went to the city to live with our uncle. We took turns to do the house work

and cook. When Mai's turn came she would ask me to cook for her since she could not cook. I helped her.

Mai dropped out of school. She was very beautiful and got married to a young man who had a lot of money. I stayed in school and graduated. I got a job as a secretary in a company.

When Mai's husband went to work, Mai would go to the cook shop or restaurant and buy food for him. Mai's husband did not know this. After the meal, her husband would praise her and say, "Thank you honey, you are a very good cook."

One day on a Sunday, Mai's husband had invited some friends over at the house for a meal. He asked her to prepare a nice dish. Mai was very embarrassed. All the shops were closed. She tried to call me to help her, but I had travelled to the village to visit our parents.

The guests arrived and there was nothing to eat. Mai's husband was ashamed and very angry.

The next morning, as I was preparing to go to work, a car stopped by my house. A young man jumped out

angrily holding a suitcase in his hands. He dashed it on the floor and said, "Take your sister; I do not want her as my wife anymore. She is very lazy. All she does is eat and sleep. She cannot read and write and so does not have a job. I am responsible for everything. I want a woman who will help me to support the house."

Mai was crying and begging her husband to forgive her. But the young man did not listen. He jumped in the car and drove off.

"Our parents spoiled me," Mai said. "Look at the shame I am facing now."

"Don't cry Mai," I tried to comfort her.

The next day, Mai joined me in the kitchen to cook. I taught her and she began to learn slowly. I took her to the pastry school where she learned how to bake. After six months, Mai graduated and could bake and cook even better than me. I loaned her some money and she opened a small bakery.

One day her husband went to the bakery to buy cornbread. He did not know that the bakery was Mai's

bakery. He was very surprised when he saw Mai. He was ashamed and almost ran out.

The next day, he came to me to apologize for what he had done to Mai. Mai refused at first, but when her husband knelt down and held her foot and said, "I am sorry my wife, please forgive me," she felt sorry for him and accepted.

I told him, "If your wife does not have a skill and is not educated, you as a husband should help and teach her. Do not disgrace her by throwing her out of the home. It is never too late to learn."

Mai was crying. "If I have a child, I will train the child so that what happened to me will not happen to him or her," she said. She hugged her husband and they went home.

END



S. Saye Dahn

Pregnancy

By Lorpu Gorzuwan,

Accelerated Learning Student Level 3, Bong County

My name is Lorpu. I am 17 years old and in Level 3 of accelerated learning class. I have two children. I had my first child when I was 14 years old. The father of my child denied the pregnancy and ran away from the village. I felt very ashamed. My friends laughed at me, and my parents were very angry with me for getting pregnant. I was confused and did not know what to do.

Taking care of the child myself was very hard. There was no food for the child and myself. I credited some money from a lady who felt sorry for my condition. I decided to start a small business. I did not make enough money from the business to live. But I kept trying.

One day, as I was selling, a man called me and said that he loved me and would take care of me. I told him that I was not interested in any relationship and wanted to continue my school. He promised to give me more money to increase my business, pay my rent and send me to school. He said he knew my parents and that he had many sisters

and would not do anything to hurt me. He was about 10 years older than me. He looked responsible. I believed and trusted him.

After few months, I became pregnant for the second time. When I told him about the pregnancy, he denied at first, but when I started to cry he accepted and promised to take care of me. The next day when I went to his house. But he had left the village. No one knew where he went. I now had two children to take care of. My parents did not want to see me. My condition was worse.

I am now in Accelerated Learning Level 3. I advise my friends not to be like me. Please be careful not to have a baby until it is the right time.

END



Perseverance

By Evelyn Koffa

Accelerated Learning Level 3 Student, Grand Gedeh County

I am a handicapped girl. My two legs are not strong due to polio. I walk to school with crutches. The school is far from our town. I am always late because I cannot walk as fast as the other children. But the teachers understand my condition and do not punish me.

One day, as I was climbing the steps to my class, I slipped and fell down. Some of the students laughed at me, but one of the boys helped me up.

Because of my condition, I do not play with the other students. I sit all by myself and watch the other children play kickball, football and volley ball. I like to play ludu and scrabble.

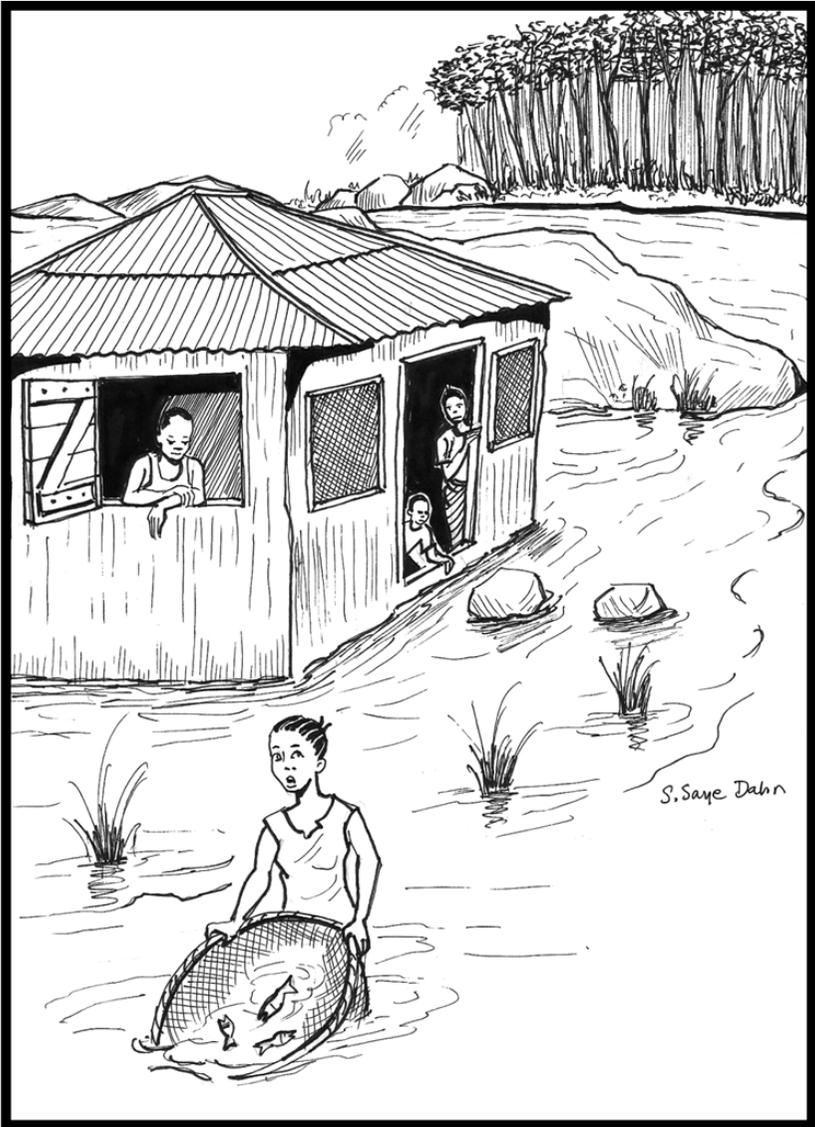
At first, I used to feel shy and ashamed of my condition. But my mother and my teachers love me. They say that I should not let a physical condition discourage me. They say I should learn to accept my situation and love

myself and that when I go to school and become educated life will be better for me. I believe what they say and I will try my best to go to school. I will use my brains more than my body.

I read and hear stories about people whose condition is worse than mine. Some of them cannot see or hear but they are able to go to school and live a better life.

I will listen to what my mother and my teachers tell me. I will accept my condition. I will love myself. I will study my lessons and one day God will help me to become someone important and useful in the future because I do not want to be a beggar like some other handicapped people I have seen.

END



Living Near the River

By Musu Kaypah

Accelerated Learning Level 3 Student, Grand Gedeh County

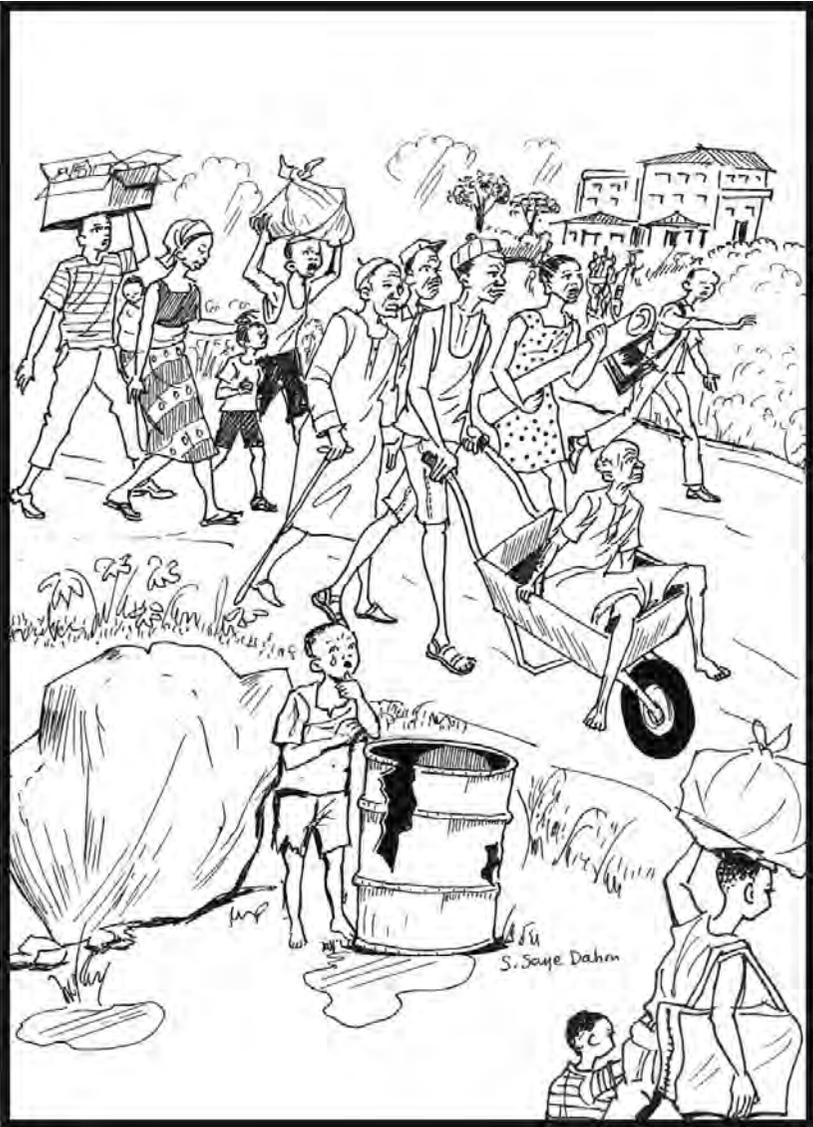
I live with my mother. We live near the river. My father died while fishing on the river. We get our food from the river. We set baskets and catch fish and crayfish. The fish is good for our health, but we have to sell the fish for money. We use the money to buy rice, kerosene, school uniforms, copybooks and other things we need.

When it rains, the river overflows and our house is flooded with water. We leave our house and go to stay with our relatives up in the highlands. We find it hard to go to school because all the creeks are filled. It is dangerous to cross them because there are snakes and crocodiles in the water. We cross the creeks to go to school in a canoe.

It is hard to live in a place where there is a lot of water. The water can provide food but it can also destroy your home when it rains heavily.

This is my life- living near the river!

END



The Missing Child

By Jonathan Scott

Accelerated Learning Level 3 Student, Bong County

Once upon a time, during the war, as we fled Gbarnga, I got lost in a huge crowd. I could not find my parents. I sat by the road crying. There was a heavy down pour of rain. I was hungry, wet and cold. As it was getting dark, I joined a family I did not know. They gave me a heavy load to carry. I fell along the way many times. I had no shoes and my feet were bruised and swollen. The family treated me very badly. I worked all day fetching water, scrubbing the pots and washing clothes. I would sit by myself and cry for my parents. I became very dry and sick. But there was no medicine. Life was hard.

Mr. David, our neighbor, observed all that was happening to me. I explained my story to him and he felt sorry for me. He decided to help me. He went to my foster parents and pretended to be my uncle. He thanked them for taking care of me. My foster parents pretended to cry when I was leaving. They told me to stay with them.

“Who will work for us?” They said.

“You will work for yourselves,” I said in a soft voice.

“What did you say?” the wife asked. “You ungrateful boy. We found you on the road and here you are leaving us.”

“Leave him alone,” Mr. David said.

He took me to his house and took good care of me. He sent me to school. I was happy and took Mr. David as my father.

One day, Mr. David said, “We have to find your parents.”

He helped to find my parents. I was happy to find my parents but sad to leave Mr. David.

What I learned from Mr. David is that it is good to help children who are suffering. God will reward those who do so.

END

MY FRIENDS



The Happy Mother

By Emmanuel Sumo

Accelerated Learning Level 3 Student, Bong County

There lived a woman called Lorpu Brown in Gbarnsue village, Bong County. Ma Lorpu had four children. The names of the children were Sawa, Simon, Mathew and Tokpah. Her husband had died many years before. Ma Lorpu worked very hard to educate her children. Sawa was the oldest of the children followed by Topkah, Matthew and Simon the youngest.

Because of poverty, Ma Lorpu could only afford to pay the school fees of Simon, Mathew and Tokpah, while Sawa, the oldest, supported herself in school by selling roasted fish. Because she had no money, she would take the fish from another woman on credit and pay back when she had sold the fish keeping the profit for herself. This is how she was able to pay for her education and sustain herself.

Years later, Sawa graduated from high school. Her mother and brothers were very happy. Their mother bought a goat for her party. But Sawa refused to have a party. She told her mother to sell the goat so she could use

the money to go college. A few years later, Sawa graduated from college and found a job as a teller in a bank. Sawa had saved enough money and bought a used vehicle. One day Sawa decided to go back to the village to visit her family. While on her way, she passed two boys taking a sick person to a native doctor in a wheel barrow. When she arrived at her family house, the door was closed and there was no one at home. The neighbors told her that her mother was very sick and her brothers and sister were taking her to the herbalist. Just then, Sawa realized that the people she had passed by on her way were her sick mother and brothers and sister.

She rushed in the car and cried when she saw her mother covered with an old bed sheet lying in the wheel barrow with her legs dangling out. She stopped immediately and told them to get in the car. She had put on weight, looked healthy and well dressed. Her family did not realize who she was and was unwilling to get in the car. They all shouted with joy, when she said, "I am Sawa, your sister." Her mother was very weak and frail but managed to

open her eyes, held Sawa's hand smiled and said, "Thank you my daughter."

Sawa took her mother to a hospital in Monrovia. Ma Lorpu got well and cried tears of joy when Sawa bought beautiful lappas, slippers and a bag of rice for her. She returned to the village. "God will bless my daughter, if it had not been for you, I would have died."

"Thank you ma", Sawa said. "You took care of me when I was a child. It is now time I take care of you too."

END



Kou Suah of Gobi Davoryee

By Arthurlyne Flomo

Accelerated Learning Level 3 Student, Bong County

There lives a girl in Gobi Davoryee village named Kou Suah. Kou is 13 years old. She lives with her grandmother in Davoryee. Kou goes to school every day. She likes to study her lessons.

Her school is three hours walk away from her village.

Kou's grandmother makes and sells mats. This is how she pays Kou's school fees. After school, Kou and her grandmother go in the swamp for bamboo and other materials for making mats. With the materials, she helps her grandmother to plait the mat.

One day a villager asked Kou, "You are a woman, why are you plaiting mat?"

Kou said to him, “A man has brains and a woman has brains. A man has hands and a woman has hands. So why a man can plait mat and a woman should not do the same?”

The man shook his head and walked away silently.

One morning, as Kou was going to school, she saw an old man. The old man, asked her, “Kou, why do you like to go to school?”

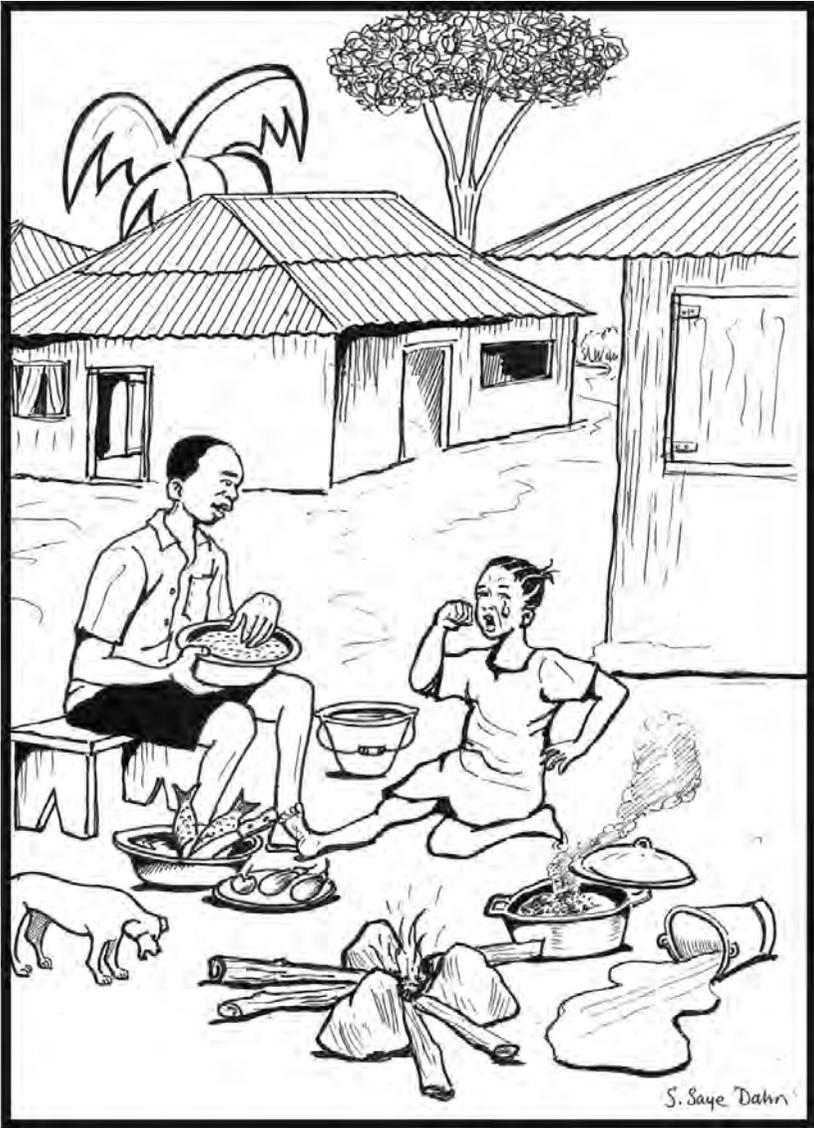
Kou told the old man, “I like to go to school because I want to live a better life tomorrow. I want to change the way we think and live in this village. If I am educated, I will not have to go in the swamp everyday to make mats. Instead of using my hands, I will use my brains. Education will change the way I live and the way I think and do things.”

The old man was surprised at what the little girl, Kou had said. “Girls of your age are thinking about money, fine clothes and marriage. But, here you are thinking about education and changing your life.”

The old man praised Kou for her plan. “You are right my daughter, if you are serious and continue with your

education, you will be the light for your grandmother, your friends and this village, Gorbi Darvoryee. Through you, other young boys and girls will go to school and become good people.”

END



Life in Davoryee

By Yarkpah Martor

Accelerated Learning Level 3 Student, Bong County

There lived a boy in Darvoyee named Gonda. He was tall and light in complexion. Together with his parents, he lived in a very beautiful house. Gonda had a younger sister named Meilakeh. She was 8 years old. She liked to help her brother with the house work.

One day Gonda and his sister helped to clean the house. He swept the yard, washed their parents' clothes, and cooked.

"Why should you cook?" Meilakeh said, "You are a man. Men do not cook. I have only seen our mother cook and not our father."

"Because our father does not cook does not mean that men do not cook," Gonda replied. "Both men and women should cook. Some men cook better than women."

"I want to cook," Meilakeh said.

"No," said Gondah. "You are still a child."

“I need to learn how to cook now, while I am still young, so that when I get older, I will be a good cook. If I do not learn now, I will not be able to do it when I get older.”

“You are right,” Gonda said. Gonda gave Meilakeh some rice to cook. It was her first time and the rice was burnt. Meilakeh was sad and started to cry.

“Don’t cry. As you practice more, you will be a good cook. Practice makes perfect,” Gonda said.

Gonda kept cooking and Meilakeh watched how he did it. Slowly he taught her and she became an excellent cook.

Some of the other boys laughed at Gonda. But Gonda didn’t care. He knew that there is no such thing as women’s work or men’s work.

When Gonda’s mother and father came home they were proud. They knew that little Meilakeh could grow up and do many things that people think only men can do and that Gonda would grow up and do things that people think women can do.

Gonda's mother and father knew that both their children would grow up to become leaders who could teach people to do things they didn't think they could do.

END



The Hungry Man

By Emmanuel Sumo

Accelerated Learning Level 3, Bong County

There lived a man called Kollie who lived in Lofa county. During the war, he fled his village and travelled to Kpatawee in Bong County. He spent more than two months traveling in the bush. He lived on wild fruits, roots and leaves. His clothes were dirty and torn.

After months of traveling he came to a village. He begged the villagers for food, but nobody gave him food to eat because the villagers themselves had no food to eat. While sitting under a plum tree, an old lady saw him and took him to her house. She gave him few pieces of cassava. Kollie was so hungry that he ate the cassava without noticing that there were ants on it. He only realized when he saw the ants crawling on his beard and mustache. He cried, when he thought about his farm he had left in Lofa.

“Look at me,” he said, “eating stale cassava with ants while banana, plantain, eddoes and rice are spoiling on my farm.”

He had no clothes, so the old lady gave him an old red dress to wear. People laughed at him and called him Madame Kollie.

“It is better to wear a lady’s dress than to go naked.” He said. He went out and saw a boy. The boy asked him, “Why are all you so dry and skinny?”

“You are worse than us,” the boy said. “Go and look at yourself in the mirror.”

When Kollie saw himself in a mirror, he was shocked at what he saw. His beard was overgrown and his hair was gray and bushy. He could not remember himself. There was no razor blade around so the old lady used a sharp knife to shave his beard and cut his hair. “Now, you look like a human being,” the old lady said.

The old lady was kind, but she did not have the resources to take care of him.

He decided to make his way through Bong County. Kpatawee was the best way to get through he thought. On his way he spent two months of traveling through the forest. He walked many days on empty stomach. After few

days of travelling he came to a village where he decided to ask the villagers for food; but for his surprise, those he asked said to him, "We have no food to give you."

Upon their responses, on his journey he again went. Many days went by as he travelled and was still hungry for he had not eaten anything. Luckily for him a group of Kpelle families he met in the next village were very happy to receive him. They saw that he needed food for he was very weak in the body. But while eating, he did not take notice of a fly that fell in that nice cassava leaf and ate them all together with the rice.

Now, when Kollie looks back on those days during the war, he thanks God every time he puts a piece of food in his mouth. Kollie never forgets what it means to be hungry and he made a pledge to himself to always help anyone he sees who is hungry.

END



Friendship

Anonymous

Kollie Gwee Public School Tubman Farm, Bong County

Queeta and Yama were two friends who lived in Flomo Village. Queeta's parents were poor while Yama's parents were rich. One day Yama's parents decided to send her to their oldest son in Lamco in Yekepa, Nimba County to go to school. Yama agreed to go but told her parents,

"I will not go if my friend Queeta does not go with me." Her parents were very surprised.

"Why do you want to spoil your luck, our daughter? Though Queeta and you are very good friends, your luck and future is different from hers. If you are educated tomorrow, you can still help her."

"No, Ma," Yama said, "Queeta's parents are poor because they did not go to school. If she does not go to school, she will also be poor and her children will also suffer and be poor. We should not let that to happen. Let us help her ma, I beg you."

For three days, Yama refused to eat any food until her parents agree her to go to Lamco with her friend Queeta. Yama lost weight and her parents were worried and afraid that something might happen to her. Her father got angry and tried to beat her and force her to eat, but her mother said, "Please take it easy with her she is a child."

After a week, they granted her request and allowed her to Lamco with best friend Queeta. Yama was very happy and ran to Queeta's house. Yama met Queeta sitting in the corner crying.

"Why are you crying?"

"I want to go with you."

But Queeta's parents said, "We are poor and don't have money to send her to Lamco. We work on other people's farm before we have food to eat."

"Don't worry. My parents have agreed that Queeta and I go to Lamco and they will pay our transport fare. My brother will take care of us in Lamco."

In Lamco, the two friends studied hard and did well in their lessons. Yama was good at English while Queeta

was good at Math. They studied together and helped each other with their lessons. They did everything together to the point that people called them twins. Because of their good grades, they were awarded a scholarship after graduation from high school and went to the university. Queeta became an accountant and Yama became a nurse. They went back to the village to visit their parents. A tree fell on Queeta's father while working as a contractor on someone's farm. Her mother was heartbroken and died few weeks after. Queeta and Yama were very sad and cried.

They returned to Lamco. Queeta got married and had twins, a boy and a girl. She named them after her father and mother.

Yama never forgot what Queeta did for her, so she stayed with her through Queeta's time of grief. Throughout their lives, they remained the best of friends and helped each other through the hard times and enjoyed the good times together.

END



Wolowien, My Home

By Francess M. Collins

Accelerated Learning Level 3 Student, Maryland County

In Wolowien village, there is a school called Wolowien Public School. The school is located on a hill overlooking the street and the town. Many girls and boys who attended Wolowien public school are leaders in their community, the county and the country. Some of them have returned to Wolowien to serve their people while others have never come back. We call them the lost children of Wolowien. We hope they will remember their roots and one day come back home.

In Wolowien there is girl who lives with her grandmother. The name of the girl is Nimba. All of Nimba's friends go to school, but Nimba does not go to school. One day she asked grandmother, "Is it good for a child to be educated?"

"No!" Grandmother said.

"Why?" asked Nimba.

She explained, “When a child is educated that child will not care for his/her parents. When she is a girl, she does not respect her husband.”

“No!” Nimba said to her grandmother. “Not all children behave like this. Please send me to school. I will not forget you when I am educated.”

When Nimba’s father heard this he sent for Nimba and carried her to Harper to attend school. Before he left he said, “Remember what you are here for and what you said to your Grandmother.”

Nimba graduated from high school and is now attending the Tubman University in Harper. She is training to be a teacher. She wants to go back to Wolowien as a teacher, to serve her people and help her grandmother. In the way she treats her grandmother, she is proving to grandmother that she can be educated and care for and respect her grandmother even more than when she had no education!

END



Sumo's Story

By Keelee Zubah

Accelerated Learning Level 3 Teacher, Lofa County

Once there was a boy named Sumo. Sumo lived in Lofa County in a small town called Bodeh Town. One day, Sumo's father bought a gun and gave it to him.

"This is a gun. I want you to be a hunter. I am a hunter, my father was a great hunter. So too was my grandfather."

Sumo looked at the gun; it was old but could work. He had never touched a gun before.

"No Pa, I don't want to be a hunter. I want to go to school and be a lawyer."

"What!" Sumo's father shouted, "You are not going to be a lawyer. Lawyers are liars."

"No Papa, not all lawyers are bad. Some are good and honest people who defend and speak for poor people." Sumo ran in the house and brought a pencil. "Papa," he said, "this is better and stronger than this gun."

“What do you mean,” his father said. “I am talking about hunting and killing big animals like elephants and marrying many wives and you are showing me a small useless pencil?”

“No Papa, this pencil may be small but it is not useless. It is powerful.”

Sumo’s father took the pencil from Sumo and broke it. “But this gun, you see... It cannot easily be broken.

“That is not the kind of power I am talking about Papa,” Sumo said. “I am not talking about force and strength. I am talking about using your mind and brains, not your body.”

Sumo’s father took him to a small room and showed him the skins and tusks animals he had killed as a hunter. The skins of lions, leopards, tigers, buffaloes and elephants decorated the wall. “You see, this what I want you to do.”

“I understand and respect you Papa, please let me go to school.” Sumo called a few elders in the village to talk to his father to allow him to go school. Through the influence of the elders, Sumo’s father finally agreed.

Sumo went to school and graduated. He did not become a lawyer but instead worked for the Forestry Development Agency (FDA). He travelled around the country teaching people to protect the forest and the wild animals.

“My father killed animals. Now I will protect them,” he said.

END



The Greedy Man

By Emmanuel Sumo,

Accelerated Learning Level 3 Student, Bong County

There lived a man in Bono Town, Bong County called Zuborlor. He was very greedy and mean. He had many friends. He would eat other people's food, but would always refuse to share with other people. So that no one would see him, he would leave his house and go deep in the forest. There he cooked and ate. Because, he did not want people to know that he was doing, he would cook at midnight and eat all the food himself. But the distance from the town was very far so before he reached the town he became hungry again.

Zuborlor's wife was not happy and told him to stop such behavior. But he refused and continued to do as he pleased.

One day, Zuborlor had no food to eat and was starving. His wife was ashamed of his behavior. She had left him. He went around the village to beg for food but no one gave him any food. While he was lying helpless on his bed, a small boy brought him a bowl of rice.

“Where did you get this from,” he asked the boy.

“This my food, Uncle Zuborlor. I see that you are starving and no one is giving you anything to eat because of your behavior. Take it and eat.”

Zuborlor was very surprised. He looked at the young boy’s thin bones and knew that the boy himself was hungry. Tears came to his eyes.

“You are a good boy,” he said. “Thank you.”

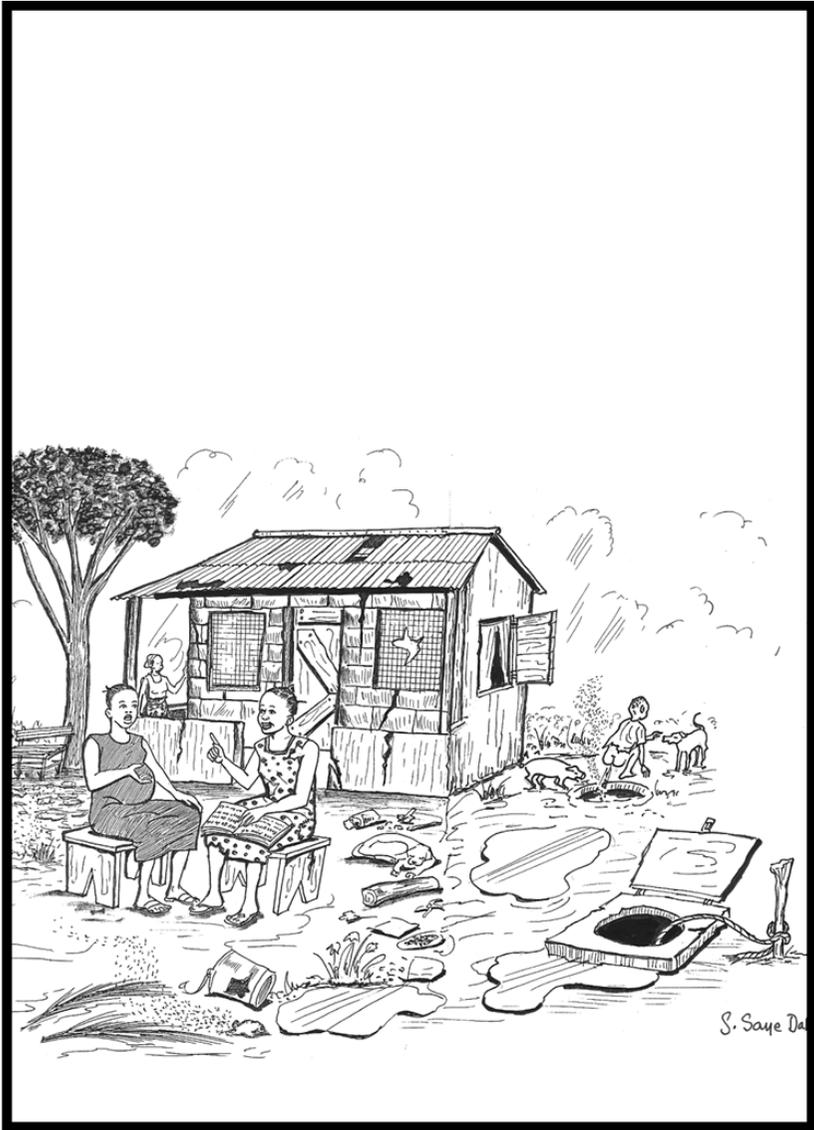
The boy said, “I do not have enough to eat myself, it is good to share the little you have.”

“That is true,” Zuborlor said. “You have taught me a lesson by what you have done for me, today.” Zuborlor ate and gained strength.

After he got off his death bed, he made a farm and shared his food with the villagers. Everyone in the village was surprised at his sudden change in behavior. The elders laughed at Zuborlor. But when Zuborlor heard them laughing, he thought of the little boy. That little boy helped him keep up his newly changed behavior.

Later the news of his change in behavior spread. His wife was living in a nearby village and heard about his new ways. His wife decided to come back to the house and they lived happily together.

END



The Girl in the Red Dress

By Saah Momoh

Accelerated Learning Student, Montserrado Coutny

Korzu lived with her mother in a one-room zinc house off the sea coast.

Their neighborhood was a bad place.

Garbage and flies were everywhere. People relieved themselves along the beaches and fought among themselves.

Thieves were everywhere, and they stole what little they could find’.

Korzu and her mother were poor.

All they had was a small mattress, two pots and a bucket.

Korzu’s mother sold small things such as pepper, salt, fish and oil, in front of their house. Korzu helped her mother by selling oranges.

Even so, Korzu's mother had sent her to the local school across the road.

One day, as Korzu sat in front of her house studying, her friend Bendu came to visit her.

"Hello oh Korzu," said Bendu, who was about five months pregnant.

"Oh, Bendu, you alright?" asked Korzu smiling.

"You girl, it's not easy," answered Bendu, sitting opposite Korzu on the bench.

"What happened?" asked Korzu. "Has Moses been beating you again?"

"Yes," said Bendu. "Every day he drinks and beats me, when he can't even help take care of the children."

Bendu was seventeen years old, and the mother of three children. For Korzu she sold oranges.

"Sorry," said Korzu, patting Bendu on the back.

Weeping, Bendu said, "I can't blame anybody but myself. Instead of going to school, I decided to get married

at an early age. Here I am now seventeen years old with three children and being beaten like a drum everyday.”..Then she said Korzu, “What are you studying now?”

“I am in school. I want to be a nurse when I finish school.”

“You are doing well,” said Bendu. “One day you will finish school and live a good life, not sitting in the sun selling oranges like me.

“It is not late to go to school,” said Korzu. “If you are serious, you can still go to school and become somebody good tomorrow.”

“Thank you, Korzu, I will think about it,” Bendu said.

END



Hawa Lorpu, the Stubborn Girl

By Hawa Korboi

Accelerated Learning Level 3 Student, Bong County

In Salalah, Bong County there lived a girl called Lorpu. Lorpu was a stubborn and disrespectful girl. She did not listen to advice from her parents and friends. She would shout and talk back to her parents and elders who tried to advise her when she did something wrong.

She would say, "Leave me alone! My life is my life; you have nothing to do with me. You are living your life and you don't want me to enjoy mine."

One day, while Lorpu was going to the market in Zeanzue to buy food, a black jeep came and stopped by her. It was mid-day and she was in the middle of the road.

A man got down from the car asked her, "Fine girl, where are you going?"

"I am going to the market," she told the man.

"Do you want us to take you?" The man asked.

“Oh yes,” she agreed with excitement.

She jumped into the car. On her way, she saw some of her friends and waved to them, but none responded. They were afraid of the men in the car.

When they got the market, she opened her mouth to say, “This is where I am going.” But she could not talk. She wanted to fight but she could not. She was very weak.

The men drove her to Gbatala. They tied her up and kept her in an old warehouse in the bush. One day a farmer passing by heard a strange sound in the warehouse. When he got closer he saw a young girl. Her hands and legs were tied. A piece of cloth was tied across her mouth. She was dusty and rolling on the floor. The farmer ran home and called the villagers. Lorpu was released but the men who had kidnapped her had all run away.

“Lorpu,” the villagers said, “we saw you in the car and knew those men are evil people. But we could not help you because you do not listen to advice. See what has happened to you. If it had not been for this farmer, those men would have harmed you even worse.

“I am sorry,” Lorpu said.

From that day, Lorpu changed. She became a respectful girl who listened to the advice of others.

END



Flomo Jenteh, the Canoe Boy

By Sarah Malloberry

Accelerated Learning Level 3 Student, Bong County

There lived a young boy called Flomo Jenteh. He lived in Gbataleh Town near the St. Paul River. Flomo was the only child of his mother. His father died many years ago. Flomo had a canoe and he earned his living taking people across the river.

One day Flomo's mother was very sick and the herbalist said she urgently needed fresh fish soup to make her well. Flomo knew how to take people in the canoe across the river, but he did not know how to catch fish.

He was not a fisherman. However, for the sake of his mother, he would do anything. He bought a fishing net, got in his canoe and went to fish. As he tried to cast his net, the canoe turned over and he fell in the river. As he was about to drown, another fisherman came over and rescued him.

The next day, Flomo's mother's condition got worse. "I cannot sit here and watch my mother die," Flomo

thought. "I have to do something. I will go to the river tomorrow and get some fish."

Flomo went to the river, got in his canoe. He cast his net all day, but caught nothing. As he was about to come home, he decided to try one more time. He cast his net and caught a very big fish. The fish was so big that he could not lift it in his canoe. A fisherman saw him struggling and helped him take the fish home.

There was a big celebration in the village as this was the biggest fish ever caught.

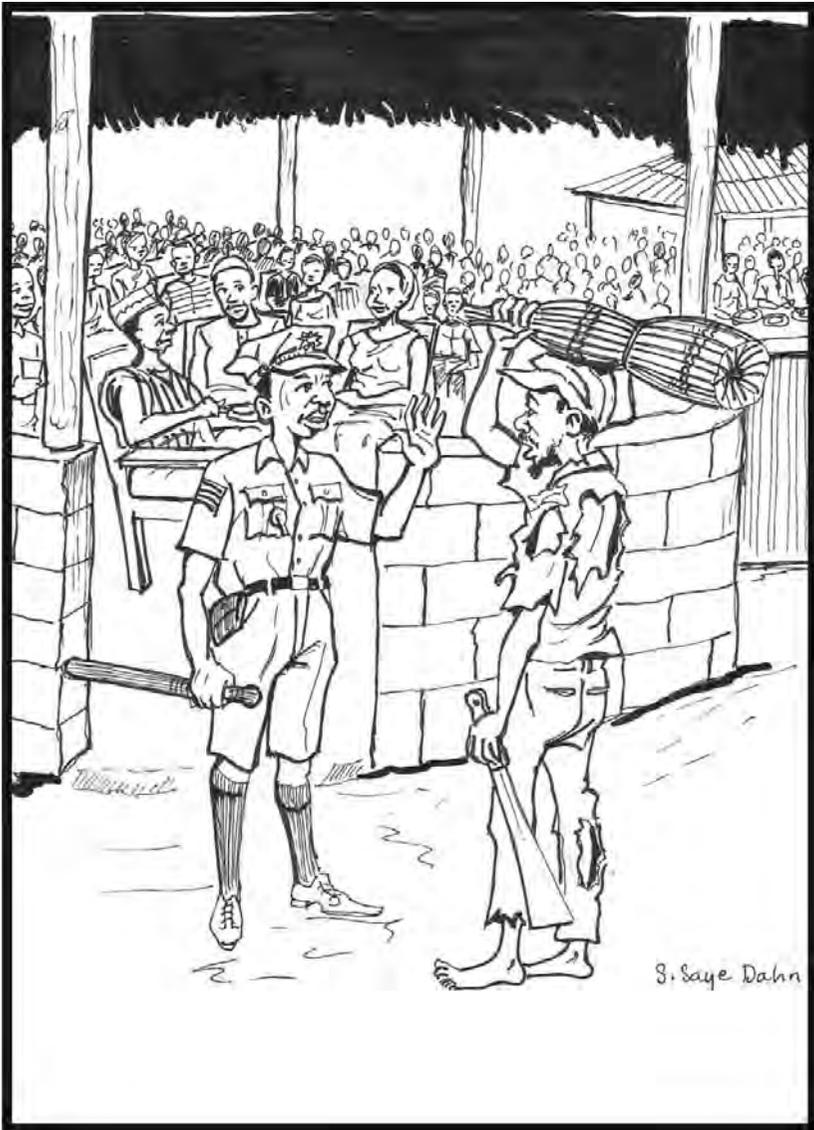
Flomo took a piece of the fish and prepared a nice pepper soup for his mother. Few days later, his mother got well.

"How did you get that big fish, my son? You are not a fisherman."

"No one was born with a special skill," said Flomo. "Once you are determined and serious, you can do anything in this world."

“You are right my son,” Flomo’s mother said.
“Where there is a will, there is a way.”

END



The Clothes

By Patrick Toe

Accelerated Learning Level 3 Student, Grand Gedeh County

There lived a man called Joplo who lived in a town called Gbuken. Joplo was a teacher and well respected. One day an important guest arrived in the village from Monrovia.

Joplo had gone on his farm. But after the guest arrived, the village threw a big celebration. When Joplo arrived home, the elders and the villagers had gathered in the town hall eating, singing, dancing and merry making. Joplo had a basket on his back, a cutlass in his hands and dressed in old and torn up clothes. He had no shoes and was barefooted.

He went to the hall. As he tried to enter, the security stopped him. He was surprised and asked, "Why are you stopping me from entering?"

"We cannot allow you to get in because you are not well- dressed. Your clothes are dirty and old and you have on no shoes." Joplo was angry.

He went home and came back dressed in a nice suit, a tie and shoes. When he arrived, the security greeted and welcomed him with smiles. Joplo sat down and was immediately served a plate of jollof rice and a soft drink.

To everybody's surprise, Joplo took the plate of rice and emptied it in his coat pockets. He put the meat in his trousers' pockets and poured the soft drink on his shoes. The music and dancing stopped and everybody stared at Joplo.

The chief asked Joplo, "Why did you behave like this? You have disgraced yourself and everybody. Are you out of your head?"

"No, I am not out of my head." Joplo replied. "I came here in farm clothes with no shoes and the security drove me away. Now that I am dressed in nice clothes you have accepted me. You have respected and honored my clothes, not myself. So, let the clothes eat the food."

Everybody agreed with Joplo. They all apologized for what had happened.

The moral of the story is: “Respect people for who they are not for what they wear or what they look like.”

END

MY CULTURE



The Cat and the Rat

By Kezelee Zulbah

Accelerated Learning Level 3 Teacher, Lofa County

Traditional Story

Once there lived a cat and a rat. They lived in a village in Lofa County called Bardazu.

One day, the cat went to the rat and said, "I want you to marry me."

The rat said, "We are not from the same family.

"We do not have to come from the same village before we get married," replied the cat.

"I will think about it," the rat said. "Come back after one week for my response."

After, one week, cat went back to rat and said, "I have come for my response."

"I have thought about what you said, but before I accept, you need to cut off a piece of your mouth as it is too long."

Because of the love cat had for rat, he went to the blacksmith and cut off a piece of his mouth. Cat went to rat and said, "I have cut off my mouth, do you accept now?"

"Not yet," rat said, "go and cut off a piece of your nose it is too long."

Cat did as rat had said. When time for the marriage came, rat ran away. Cat called goat, cow, sheep, chicken and duck and complained to them about the bad behavior of rat. But they all laughed and said, "What does that have to do with us?"

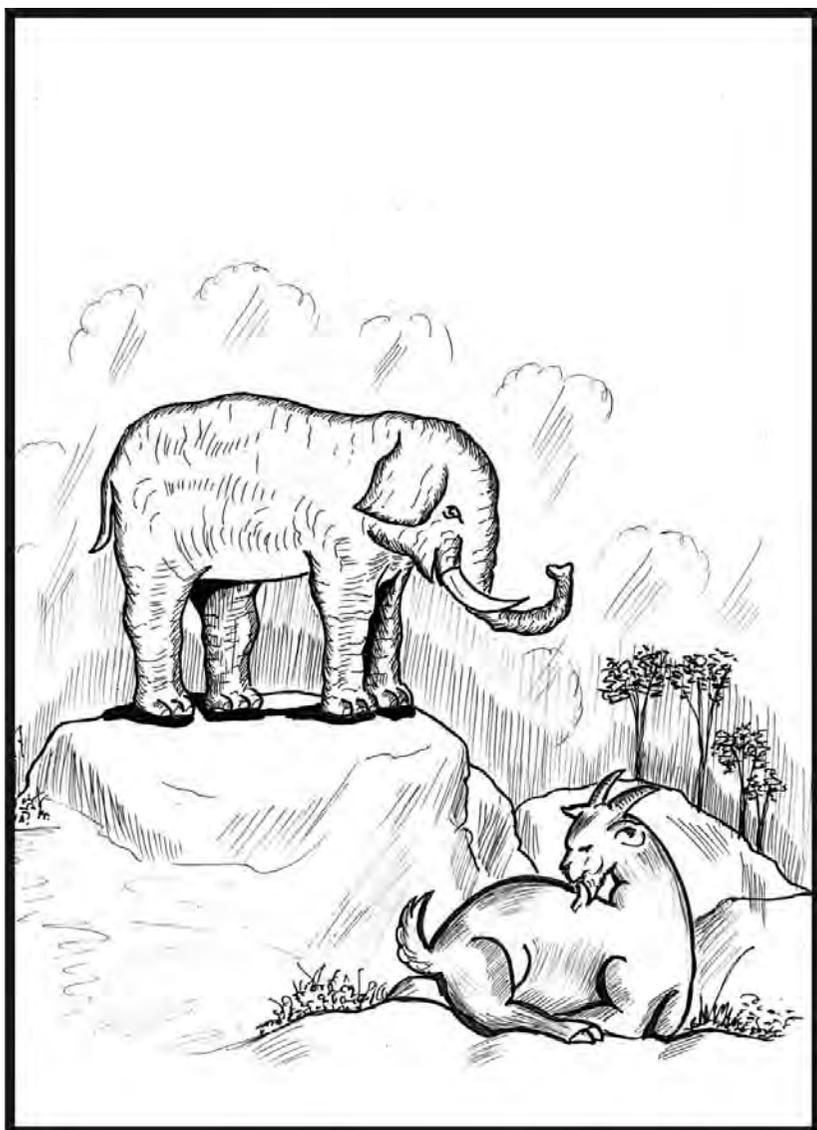
One day, as cat was running after rat in the kitchen, they knocked over pot of oil. The oil spilled in the fire. The house caught fire and spread to the houses in the village. The entire village was burned town. When visitors came to sympathize with the villagers, the chief ordered the guards to kill the goats, cows, sheep, chickens and ducks for a big party. As they were tied and ready to be killed, cat went to them and said, when I told you about the behavior of rat, you laughed at me and refused to do anything. Here you are about to be killed.

All the animals cried and said if we had known we would have solved the problem between you and rat. But it was too late. The animals were killed and eaten.

The moral of the story is:

When your friend is in trouble, don't laugh at him or her. You don't know what may happen tomorrow.

END



The Elephant and the Goat

Angeline Tonpea

Accelerated Learning Level 3 Student, Nimba County

Long ago, the elephant and the goat were best friends. They ate together and did everything together.

One time goat looked at elephant and said, "Why is your stomach so big?"

Elephant replied, "Because I can eat plenty. That is why my stomach is big."

"But I can eat more than you and my stomach is small," goat told elephant.

"What? Look at this small goat. How much food can you eat?" elephant asked goat.

"I can eat and never get tired," said goat.

"Let's put it to a test and see who can eat more," Elephant challenged goat.

"Okay, I agree. Let day break, then we start."

The next morning, goat and elephant went in the bush and started breaking down big, big trees and eating

the leaves. The areas covered by elephant eating looked like a farm after a farmer has cut down all the trees on a farm. Goat went on the field eating small, small grass. When night came they went and lay down on a large rock waiting for day to break, so they could go and see the places they have eaten to know who would win in the eating contest.

During the middle of the night, goat was still chewing in his mouth.

“What are you eating?” Elephant asked goat.

“I can’t get tired eating the rock we are lying on. I can’t get tired eating. As soon as the rock gets finish, I will start on you.”

Elephant jumped and ran into the bush. Elephant could never be seen again!

And that is how goat won the eating game!

END



How the King Educated his Village

By Francess Collins

Accelerated Learning Level 3 Student, Maryland County

There lived a king who was not educated. Despite his illiteracy, he had common sense, experience and skills. One day a delegation from another kingdom visited the king. The guests were educated, but the host was not.

The visitors gave the chief a letter from their king, but the chief could not read the letter. He called his secretary, but he had gone on the farm. He called his interpreter, but he too had traveled to the next town. The king begged the visitors to read the letter for him.

“We wrote the letter. How can we read what we have written?”

“You are the only people who can help me now,” the king pleaded.

The visitors agreed to read the letter. However, the visitors read a different message to the king. The letter asked the king to send his friend from the other kingdom one cow, two goats and ten chickens. But the visitors said

the letter requested for two cows, four goats and twenty chickens. The king gave items to the visitors. The king asked them to sleep and return to their kingdom the next morning.

“No King, we have to go now, it is getting late.” They hurriedly left the town and went home. Later, when the king’s secretary and interpreter arrived, he showed them the letter and told them what he gave the visitors.

“No!” They shouted, “You should not have given them that number of cattle.”

“Go after them now and get them,” the king shouted. When the security arrived the cattle were already slaughtered and were on the fire being cooked.

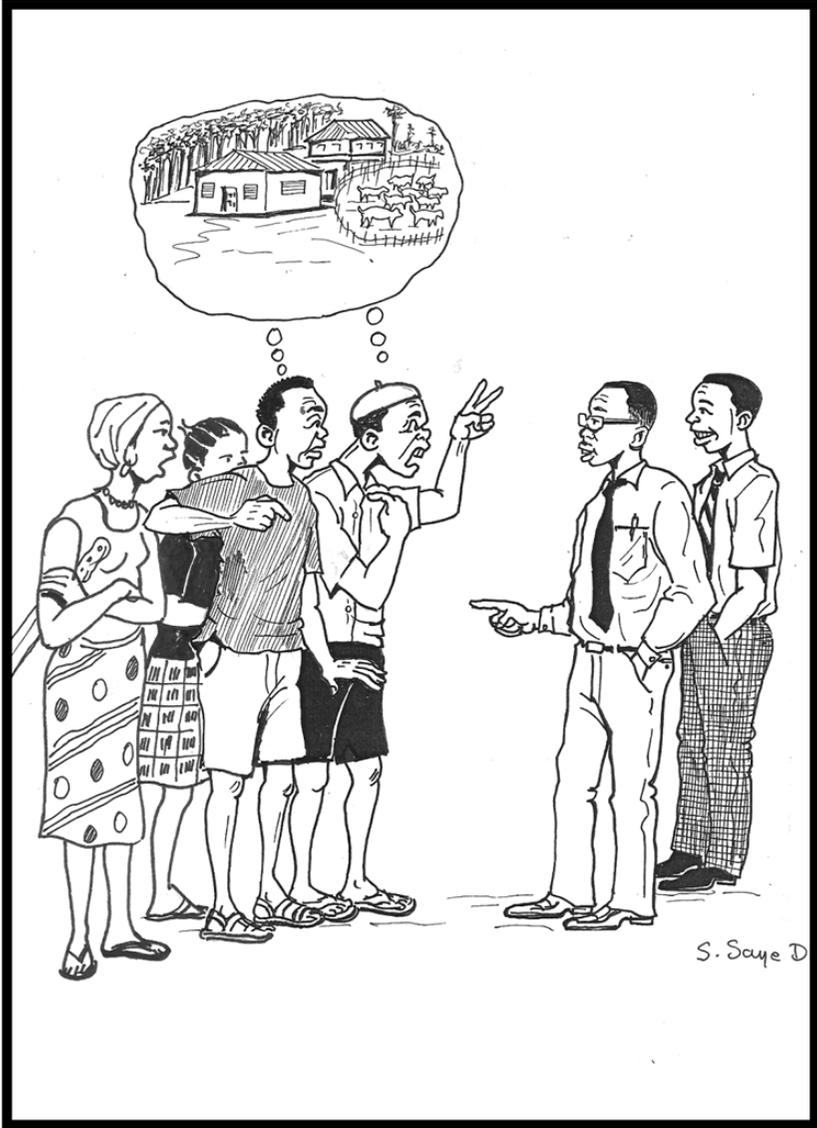
“Give us our cattle you thieves,” they demanded.

“Young men, we are not responsible for the illiteracy of your king. Tell him to go to school and be educated. Now get out of our town or else we will tie you up and throw you in prison.”

The security left and reported to the king.

“I am responsible for all this,” he admitted. “It is good to go to school and learn. If I had gone to school, this would not have happened to me. I now order that everybody in my kingdom send their children to school.”

END



Education is the Key to Success

By Paul Koloh

*Accelerated Learning Level 3 Student,
Tubman Farm Community School, Bong County*

There lived a chief in a village called Toeta. He had ten wives and twenty three children. Most of the children were not educated. The mothers wanted to send some children to live with other educated people in the city. The chief made a selection about who to send to school. He sent only his sons, selected only from his favorite wives. This is how a few of his boy children obtained their education.

Later the chief became sick and gave his will to his oldest son. "When I die, take care of my land and property. Do not sell it."

"I will do as you ask," the son said to his father.

However, when the chief died, there was a big family quarrel over how his property should be divided. The uneducated children demanded that the property be sold and the money divided equally among them.

“No, our father left his will with me. He wants us to keep his property and manage it and not to sell it.” As the older brother explained this, one of the brothers got angry and stabbed him with a knife. He died on the way to the hospital.

There was confusion and the family was divided. The uneducated children took the property and sold everything. They divided the money and lavished it on a feast. They later became poor. They had no food to eat and no place to live. They decided to go back to their educated brothers to ask for forgiveness.

“You killed our oldest brother because of property. Despite that, you are still poor. Money and property we meet in this world and we will leave it in this world.”

“We did not know what we were doing. We had not gone to school,” they pleaded.

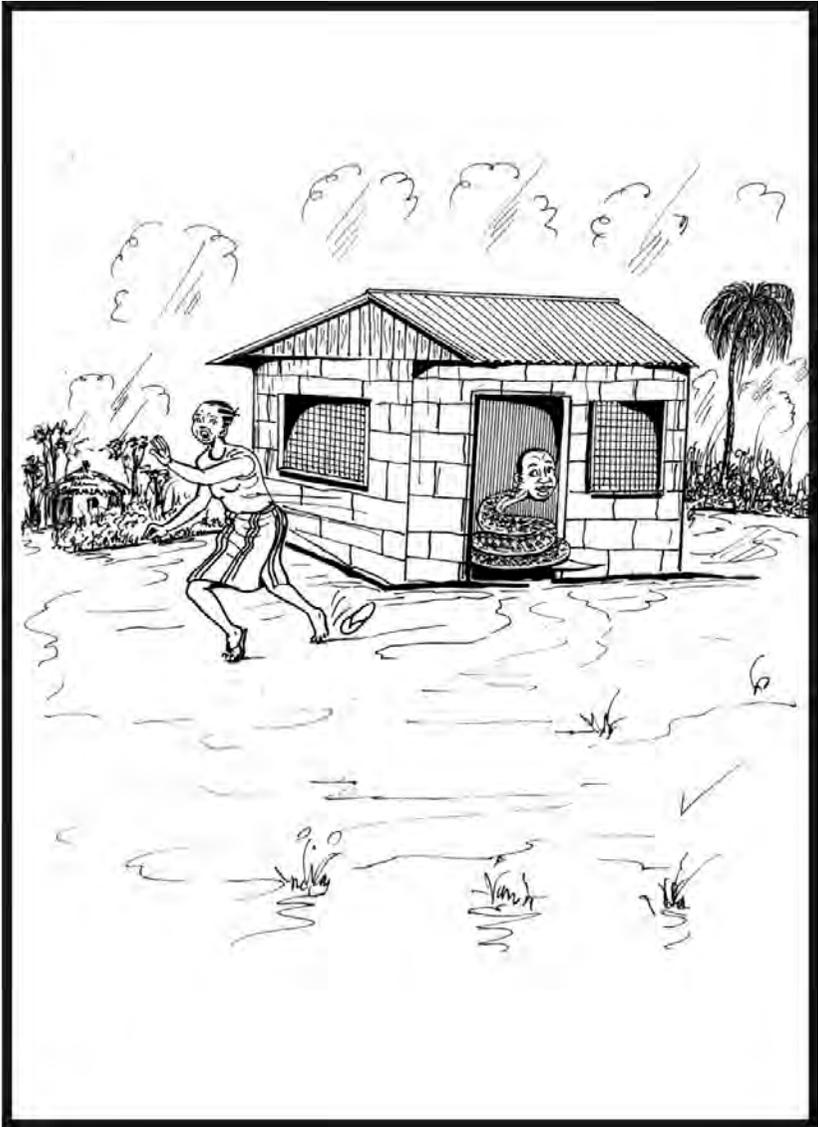
The educated brothers told them to rebuild their lives since it was not too late to learn. The boys decided to attend alternative basic education school at night. Some of them became carpenters and plumbers.

Over time, the family saw a change in their behavior. Their brothers and sisters forgave them and the family became one again and lived peacefully together.

Moral of the story:

It is good to educate all your children, not only just a few.

END



The Unfortunate Marriage

*Prince Edwin Bannie,
Accelerated Learning Level 3 Teacher*

Once there lived a beautiful girl who was the only daughter of the chief of Kutu village.

The girl refused to marry any of the young men who asked for her hand in marriage. She wanted to marry to the most handsome man who had no scar on his body.

She asked her father to host a party for all men of the town. During the party, she would select her husband.

So the chief hosted a party for all the young men in the village.

When the day of the party arrived, the chief called his daughter to choose her husband. The room felt silent as the chief's daughter slowly went around the room carefully looking at each man.

At the end, she did not make any selection as no man satisfied her.

The chief said, "My daughter you are free to go to the nearby villages to search for the man of your choice."

She searched and searched but she could not find anybody that pleased her.

One day, she travelled across the river in a small village. There, she saw a handsome young man with no scar whom she fell in love with.

The handsome young man was brought to the girl's village. There was a big celebration as the young man was introduced to the chief.

The next week, the wedding was held. The chief was happy and said, "Now, I will have a son who will lead the village when I am dead."

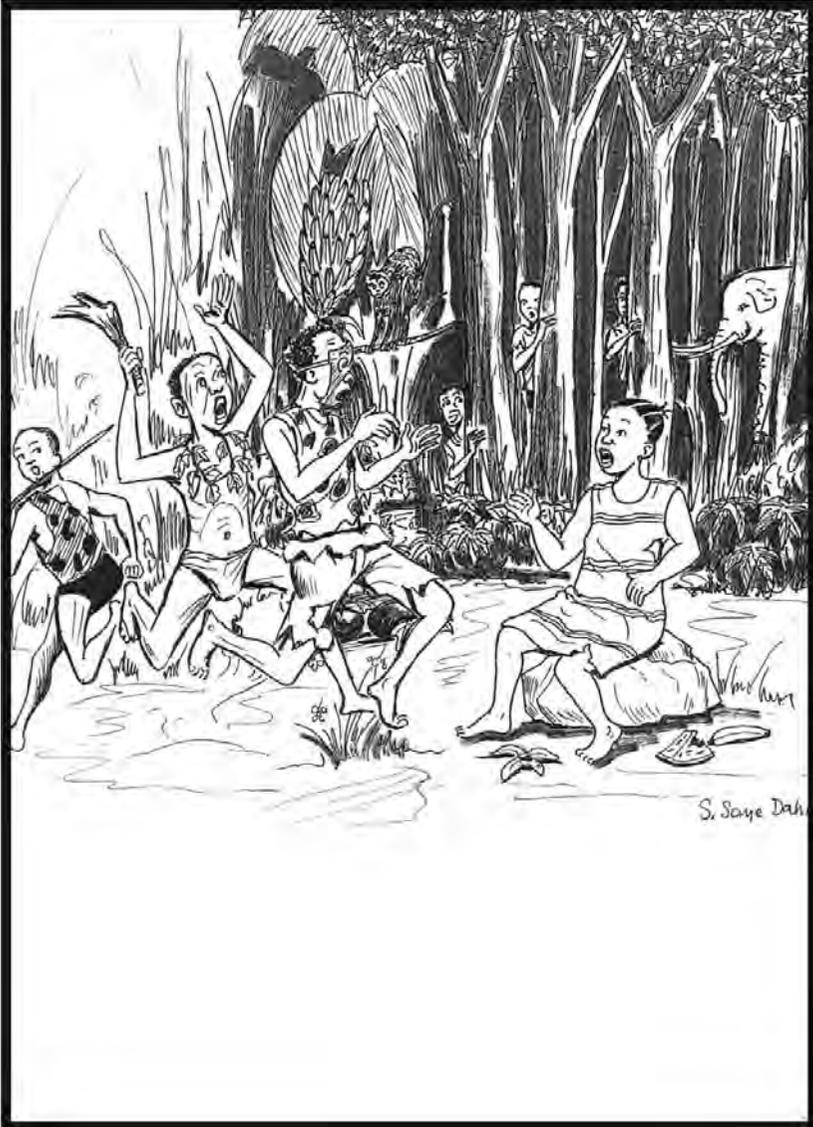
After the party, the chief's daughter and her husband went to a far away village for their honeymoon.

One day, she took a stroll in the forest, when she returned in the house; her husband had turned into a snake. He tried to bite her, but she fled the house.

She ran back to her father and reported the incident. Her father told her, "This is your doing! You rejected all the options you had. It is not a problem for you to marry a young man from another village. You can marry from any tribe you like. But, my daughter, you should not be too critical. In life be satisfied with what life offers you. Sometimes if you push everything away and demand nothing but the best, you may end up getting the worst. It is never good to be too proud in life, my daughter."

Nobody could marry the chief's daughter as she had rejected all of them. The chief and her daughter were heartbroken. His daughter grew old and did not get married. There was no grandson to inherit his property and the land.

END



The Evil Forest

By Linda Quenapaye

Accelerated Learning Level 3 Student, Nimba County

There lived a group of people in the north-eastern part of the country. They lived near an evil forest that had many kinds food and a lot of good things. There was fresh and clean water to drink. But the evil forest had a law. No man or woman born of a woman could enter forest and come back alive.

After a period of time there was famine and drought in the village. There was no food to eat and water to drink. The problem became so serious that children, women and old people were dying. The evil spirits that lived in the forest would come to the village with food and water. But the spirits would not give food and water to villagers.

The spirits would laugh and say, "There is food and water but come with us to the forest for it." The spirits did this everyday for a long period of time.

One day, a 12 year old girl decided to go to the evil forest to get food and water.

"Please, please, you cannot go!" her parents said, "you are the only child we have. We don't want you to die."

"I will go," she told her parents and friends. "I cannot sit and watch our people die and do nothing about it while we have food and water in the forest. We are already dying," the girl said. "Man and woman was born to die. If I

don't go, I will die of hunger. If I go the spirits might kill me. So, it is better to try. With God above, I will come back."

On the day the girl left for the evil forest, the entire village gathered and wished her good luck. Nobody went with her as they were afraid to die. All the young men had ran away and refused to go.

People gave her guns, spears, cutlasses, knives and other dangerous weapons. But, the girl refused to take any weapon. "If I go with weapon, the spirits may think, I am there to fight them and may harm me. If I go with open heart and open hands they may see me as a friend and help me. I am going as a peacemaker not a warrior."

The girl left. When she arrived in the evil forest, there were no evil spirits to be seen. All she saw were animals, birds and fruits of all kinds, plum, banana, lemons, watermelon. She sat down near the stream and ate until she could eat no more. She fell asleep.

When she woke up, she saw a group of young men dressed in old and dirty clothes running away from her. These were lazy boys who had refused to work and left the village many years ago. The girl laughed and laughed until tears rolled from her eyes when she saw them.

She called them and said, "So you are the ones that are pretending to be spirits making our own people afraid and denying them of food."

"We are sorry," the boys said, "We are afraid and ashamed to go the village. Please go and beg the villagers for us."

A long time had passed since the girl had left the village and gone to the forest. All the villagers had thought the girl had died. When they saw her coming, they all ran away. But slowly they realized she was carrying a basket on her head filled with food of all kinds. The girl told them all that had happened. She told them about the boys who had pretended to be spirits.

The villagers went to the forest and brought food and water. There was enough to eat and drink and the villagers lived happily together.

“Our own children made us suffer and die. Laziness brings about evil thoughts and behavior,” they said. “The forest is good, but it is the boys who were doing bad things. We must not let fear stop us from finding out the truth.”

END



The Wise Boy

By Alfred Queewon

Accelerated Learning Level 3 Student, Nimba County

Konah was a smart boy who lived in Kpeinba village with his grandfather Kpeinba. The village was named in honor of old man Kpeinba.

Konah had many brothers and sisters. One day, the young men of Kpeinba had a meeting. They talked about how so many bad things were happening in the village. There were deaths, accidents and extreme poverty among the villagers. The youth discussed why this was happening. One young man suggested, "It must be all the old people. They must be witches and wizards who are making bad things happen." People began to murmur and nod their heads in agreement. Then one youth said, "We need to get rid of these witches and wizards! Let us kill them!" The murmurs from the crowd became loud and everyone shouted and agreed to kill all the old people in the village. .

“Our village will be better without these old and wicked people,” they said.

Each young boy and girl was told to kill his grandmother and grandfather. The following week, all the old people were killed.

However, Konah thought differently than the other youth in his village. He loved his grandfather and he knew he was not a wizard. He did not kill his grandfather, but hid him deep in the forest. Konah took water and food to his grandfather secretly at night and fed him.

One day, a big monster came to Kpeinba village and gathered all the young people. He said to them, “Next week, I want all of you to plait a mat using iron. I will come back after two market days. I will kill anybody who does not have a mat made out of iron.”

There was fear in the town as no one knew how to plait an iron mat. One night Konah took some food and water to his grandfather in the forest. Konah’s grandfather observed that he was sad and not happy.

“Why are you sad?” Grandfather asked.

“A big monster came to the village this morning and he said everybody should plait a mat using iron. Anybody that does not have an iron mat after two weeks will be killed,” Konah told his grandfather.

Konah’s grandfather was quiet for a long time. At last he said, “When the monster comes to the village, tell him to show you the example of old iron mat that he wants you to look at to make the new iron mat. No one plaits a new mat without looking at the old one first. Keep it to yourself and tell no one until the monster returns.”

Konah was surprised at the wisdom of his grandfather. He smiled and hugged him, his grandfather’s long white beard covering Konah’s face.

After two weeks, the monster came in the village, laughing, shouting and jumping up and down. Young men and women were crying.

“Show me your iron mat,” the monster shouted in a loud voice that shook the ground and made people tremble with fear.

Konah stepped forward and said, "Great monster, we will give you our iron mats but first show us an example of a mat made of iron, since we cannot plait new mat without looking at the old one."

The monster was surprised at what Konah had said. "I am going to get it and come back tomorrow." The villagers waited and waited, but the monster never returned.

"How did you get this idea?" The young people asked Konah. "You have saved our lives from the monster. He would have killed us all."

"My grandfather told me," Konah said.

"How come?" They asked him. "He is not dead?"

"No, I did not kill him. I hid him in the forest."

"We were foolish to kill our grandfathers and grandmothers, old people have good idea and experience." they said. Let's go in the forest and bring your grandfather back home." Konah showed them where he had hidden his

grandfather. The young people brought the old man home on their shoulders, singing and dancing.

“Don’t spoil the old mat; you plait a new mat from looking at the old mat.” The old man was made chief of the village of Kpeinba and they people lived happily.

Moral of the story: Young people should respect their elders because they do not understand what it is they don’t know.

END