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# *Sonie Story 2*



## *Sonie Becomes a Leader in her Community*

**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 towards 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 of 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 exists in schools leading to a high level of over dependency on educational materials used by learners that are externally produced and lack 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.

The author of the following story is Saah Millimono. Saah is a youth who is physically challenged, in that he is not able to speak or hear, but he expresses his ideas through creative writing. This clearly manifests that disability does not mean inability. He serves as an example for other Liberian youth to benefit from role models who inspire them to overcome challenges. His ideas have resulted in a mini-series of chapters about the life of Sonie, a young Liberian girl who is faced with many challenges in life but takes the courage to confront and rise above each of these challenges in a positive way to transform her life and community.

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: HIV/AIDS, community service, hygiene and sanitation, preserving the natural environment, combating malaria, preventing teen pregnancy, gender equality, peaceful resolution of conflict, acquisition of work readiness skills, pursuit of education and many more topics.

The 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 register of English spoken in Liberia differs quite substantially from the register of English used in standard written documents. Learners have often found it very challenging to understand or correctly employ the phonetics, grammar and vocabulary found in documents in standard English register. The stories can be used with speakers of the Liberian variant of English to explore, differentiate and learn to employ the different spoken and written registers of English used in Liberia. The stories are intended to provide content that will allow one to bridge that transition, so that learners know how to transition from the spoken register of English used in communities and learners' every day lives into the written register of English used in the classroom. Without specific bridging, learners sometimes find it difficult to attain competency in a written register of English that is unfamiliar.

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.

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# **Sonie's Story**

## **Chapter One**

When September arrived, school opened. But Sonie couldn't afford to pay her school fees, even though she kept saving enough money at the local Susu club to do so. She began going to a class for youth of her age, held by one of the local NGOs, which means a non-governmental organization. At the alternative basic education class, Sonie was taught a number of things, such as methods to help prevent malaria, diabetes and even ways to help take care of her environment.

The class, held in a small unfinished brick building, was often packed with women, most of them mothers, who had not gone beyond high school. Yet they found the lessons worth learning and exciting, because the lessons made them more aware of their own experiences.

During one of the classes, held on a Monday morning, the teacher, Mr. Fallah, asked a question about the best way to feed a baby.

Kema, one of the older women in the class, raised her hand.

“Yes, you can answer the question, Kema,” said Mr. Fallah.

“Me, I feed my baby with breast milk,” Kema said. “But some women them can feed their baby with milk they buy from the store. Sometimes I think those women them right. Because if you keep feeding your baby with breast milk by the time you get five children your breasts finish getting flat.”

The class laughed.

Then Kema added, “And that's the reason most of our men them can look for the small, small girls with iron titis. If I look at it, I think it is time we stop this breast feeding biznes yah, so we can look young too.”

There was another outburst of laughter.

“That true Kema say,” said another woman, Finda, who was sitting beside Kema. “These days our man them only have eyes for the small-small girls iron titis.”

Again the class fell into laughter.

Finally, when the class was quiet, Mr. Fallah asked, “Who agrees with Kema, and who does not agree with her?”

Eleven of the women agreed with Kema, but the others said that it was better to feed their babies with breast milk.

“Why do you say that?” Mr. Fallah asked, pointing to Ma Lorpu, one of the women who did not agree with Kema.

Ma Lorpu said, “If my man na like me because I fini feed his children and don't look like a young girl iron tits, that his biznes. First, you gat to get money to buy milk for the baby, and dat everyday. Me, I am a poor woman. The money I get for milk will go for the food, so I think it is better to feed my baby with breast milk. “

“Ma Lorpu right,” said Grace, a slim woman who was sitting beside the class window. “That rich people can feed their baby them with milk. We the poor people don't get the money. But even if you feed your baby with breast milk, the baby can still look fat, I lie?”

“You are right,” said Mr. Fallah. “ And breast feeding should be the best for every mother. Like Ma Lorpu and Grace said, milk cost money, and most people don't have jobs and do not eat enough every day. The money they would use to buy the milk could be used to start a small business. But remember that if a mother feeds her baby with powder milk the water and the bottle she use may not be clean, and that could make the baby sick.” Then he added, “As for a man who leaves his child's mother for a small girl with iron titis, I would say he's just a foolish man. No sensible man could do such a thing.”

Again, the class roared with laughter.

In one of the classes, the women were given mosquito nets, and Mr. Fallah asked them which was better to use in the house.

“Me, I agree with the spray,” Sonie said.

“Why do you say that?” Mr. Fallah asked.

“The spray kills the mosquitoes, but the net doesn't kill the mosquitoes,” she said. “And sometimes if the net tears, the mosquitoes can still bite you. But if you spray your room just before you sleep and keep the door and windows closed, you will never suffer from the mosquitoes.”

“Who agrees with Sonie, and does not agree with her?” Mr. Fallah asked.

Some of the women agreed with Sonie, about five of them, but the rest of the class disagreed.

“Why would you use a mosquito net instead of the mosquito spray?” Mr. Fallah asked Thelma, one of the women who did not agree with Sonie.

“It is a question about money biznes, the same way it is about buying milk for a baby,” Thelma said. “If you have money, you can buy a mosquito spray everyday. But most of us are poor, and cannot buy mosquito spray everyday. So, it is good to use the net. If you buy the net and take care of it, it can last for up to one year, and the net is not

expensive. But if you use a spray you will spend more money.”

“Yes, of course,” said Mr. Fallah. “So it is better to use a mosquito net instead of a spray, that is, if you cannot buy a mosquito spray everyday. But remember that the mosquito spray is harmful. It has chemicals, and when you spray the house you breathe in those chemicals, which could make you sick.”

The class agreed, and the women decided to join money to buy a few mosquito nets. They did, and the money amounted to about \$2,000LD.

The next day, Mr. Fallah brought a few nets. Smiling broadly at each other, the women each took a net and carried it home. Then they told others how good it was to use a mosquito net, adding that the mosquito spray was bad. Soon there were a group of new students in Mr. Fallah's class, and more money was put together to buy a few more nets.

Finally, the classes came to an end, and the women were glad for what they had learned.

One day, as Sonie and Thelma met at the hand pump to draw water, Thelma said, “Those NGO people taught us plenty things o, Sonie. Sometimes when I think about all the things I learned I feel like I am a doctor.”

Sonie laughed. Then she said, “Yes, but the hard part is to practice what you learn. Most of us who go to that class will soon start doing our own things or running to the medicine men and the doctors them to eat our money for things we can do ourselves.”

“That true you say,” said Thelma. “Most of the things they told us will just pass behind our ears, like breeze.”

## **Questions**

- 1. Why do you think it is important for mothers and other older people to go to school?*
- 2. Give two reasons why you think feeding your baby with breast milk is good?*
- 3. Why do you think it is better to use mosquito net than a mosquito spray to prevent malaria?*
- 4. Do you think it is good for NGOs to give out free things such as mosquito nets and spray to people? Clearly explain your answer.*
- 5. The class raised money to buy their own mosquito nets. Write a short paragraph about your experience of working together as a group to do something in your community.*



## Chapter Two

Finally, Sonie had saved enough money for school. Also, she had kept a little money aside to do a small business. She went to a public school and got registered. Then she bought a few copybooks, pencils, and a pair of shoes.

But even though she had been eager to go to school, when she finally started she began to wonder if she would keep it up at all. Often, she would talk to the other students while Mrs. Gray was teaching. Sometime she drew in her copybooks. At other times, she looked out of the window at people outside.

One day, after school was out, one of the students, a boy whose name was John, went to Sonie. John was often making new friends with both boys and girls, and soon after Sonie began school he had begun to wonder whether they could be friends. Sonie, however, being the new student in class, was shy and often kept to herself.

“Hello, Sonie,” he said.

“Hello, John,” she said.

“I want to talk to you,” he said.

“All right,” Sonie said.

They sat on a bench in the school yard.

“Do you like the teacher, Sonie?” John asked.

“What do you mean?” Sonie asked.

“Well, I see that you don't listen when she is teaching,” John said. “When I don't like a teacher, it's the same thing I do.”

“I like the teacher!” Sonie said.

“Then why don't you listen when she is teaching?” John asked.

“Look, you boy mind your bizness,” Sonie said, and got up. “If you are looking for woman . . .”

“I am not looking for woman,” John said. “I was just trying to talk to you to listen to the teacher. Because if you don't listen to her you will never pass the lessons.”

“It isn't you that can pay my school fees,” Sonie said, “and if I fail it is not your business.”

Then she turned and went away, not looking back.

John watched her go, disappointed. He like the girl, but she had such a bad temper. How can I make friends with a girl like that, he wondered.

The next day, Mrs. Gray gave the class a math test. Sonie tried to cheat on the test. She copied another boy's

answers. Mrs. Gray saw what Sonie was doing. She tore up Sonie's test paper. Then she sent her out of the class. As she left, Sonie just wanted the floor to swallow her up. She had felt so ashamed she had nearly broken into tears.

After school, John went to Sonie again. Although she frowned and glared at him as he sat beside her, John did not mind.

“Sorry for what happened in class,” John said.

Sonie did not answer.

“I could help you with the lessons,” John said. “Every day after school we could study together.”

Still, Sonie did not say a word.

John sighed. This girl truly hated him, he thought.

Suddenly Sonie said, “What do you want from me?”

“Nothing,” John said. “I just want us to be friends. I like making friends.”

For a long moment, Sonie just looked at John. She had heard that he was a friendly boy. She said, “All right, let's be friends. “

“All right,” John said, and nodded his head. “

“Where do you live?” Sonie asked.

“I live behind the school building, in that big yellow house,” John said. “You can come there so we can study.”

“I will be too busy to go to your house,” Sonie said. “Why don't we study in the teachers' lounge after school?”

“No problem,” John said. “That's fine with me.”

“All right,” Sonie said.

They shook hands, and smiled.

Sonie and John began studying together, though only once in a while. She had to mind her baby and her small market as well. However, even when she was alone, she made it her business to study as best she could. The day she had been caught cheating and sent out of the class was still fresh in her mind, and she did want it to happen anymore. She knew she couldn't bear being made ashamed in class anymore.

One day, Mrs. Gray gave the class a science test. Sonie did not try to cheat anymore. There was no need for it anyway, for she had been studying so hard and paying attention in class.

Finally when the test had ended and the students were all about to leave, Mrs. Gray came to Sonie.

“You did well on the test, Sonie,” she said. “Thanks for studying and listening in class. I'm proud of you.”

“Thank you, too, Mrs. Gray,” Sonie said. Then she smiled, and Mrs. Gray smiled back at her.

That day Sonie was so happy she couldn't believe it. Smiling and swinging her arms from side to side as she and John walked back along the road from school, she said, “I never been so happy, John, and I can't believe it.”

John laughed, and then he said, “If I were you I would be happy too. But remember you earned your happiness yourself. You had been studying and paying attention in class.”

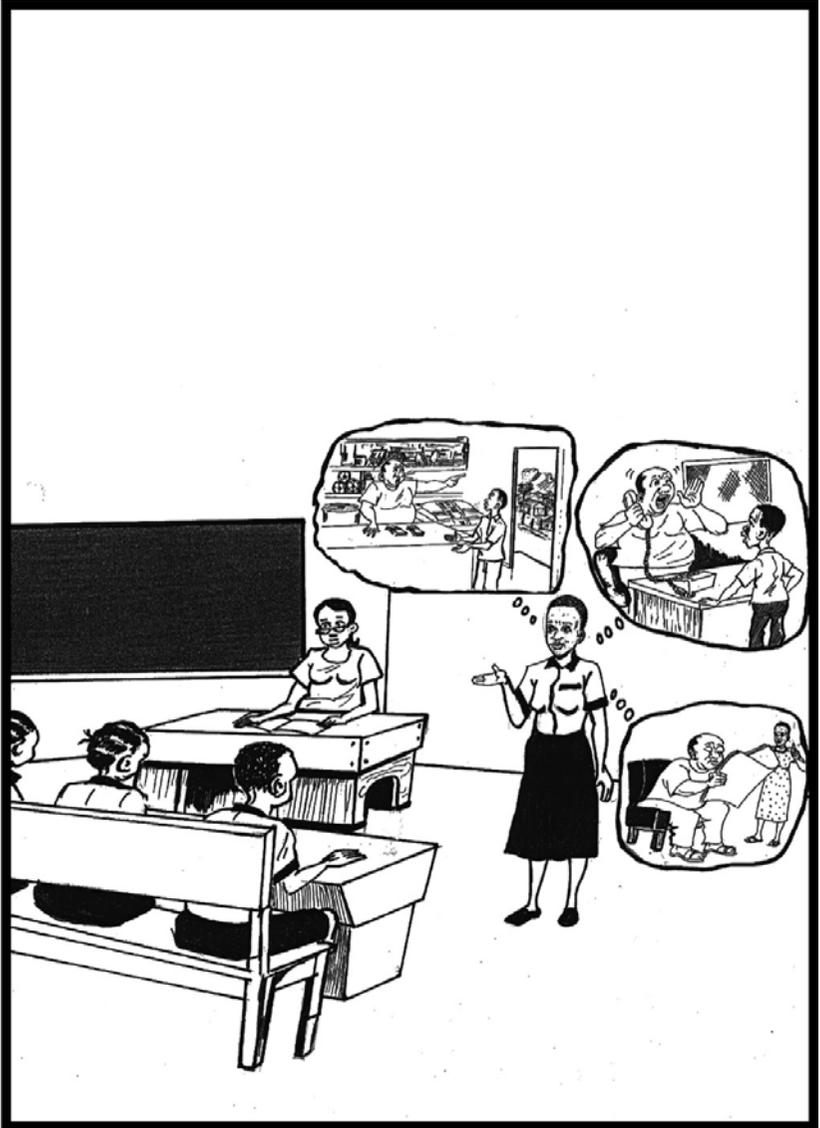
“Yes, but I would not have done so if you had not talked to me,” Sonie said. “So I must tell you thank you and that I am happy we are friends.”

“No problem,” John said.

## Questions

1. *They went down the road and stopped at the junction. They said goodbyes to each other, and Sonie went in the direction of her house. Sonie saved money to buy copybooks, pencils and a pair of shoes for her school. Do you think this was a wise way to spend her money? Explain your answer.*
2. *Sonie was caught by the teacher and paper torn up when she tried to cheat on on the Math test. Has this happened to you before? Do you do think it is right to cheat at school, at home or at work? Explain your answer.*
3. *Mrs. Gray said that Sonie did well on the Science test. Why do you think she performed better on the Science test than the Math test?*
4. *Do you think Sonie would have passed the Science test if John had not helped her? Explain your answer.*
5. *What things do you think classmates can do together to help each other in school?*





## Chapter Three

One day, Mrs. Gray told each of the students to tell a story. Sonie told a story about Mr. Martin Konneh, a fat man who lived near her house. He had a shop across the street. Sometimes he sold his goods for “plenty money.” The neighbors did not like it. But Mr. Konneh did not care. And whenever he was on the phone, he shouted at people to keep quiet.

One evening, Sonie and Mamie, were sitting at Mamie's house.

Sonie said, “Mr. Konneh treats his customers badly, Mamie. One day, he's going to lose his business in this neighborhood.”

“Yes,” Mamie said. “Mr. Konneh does not know how to talk to people well.”

“I would like to talk to him,” Sonie said.

“You had better mind your bizness and don't talk to that man,” Mamie told her. “Or you will get what you are looking for.”

“Let me try him,” Sonie said. “I am not afraid of anybody.”

That afternoon, Sonie went to Mr. Konneh's house. It was on a Sunday. Mr. Konneh's shop was closed. Sonie met him seated on his porch, reading a newspaper.

“Hello, Mr. Konneh,” she said.

“Hello,” Mr. Konneh said.

“Can I have a seat?” she asked.

“Yes,” he said, frowning.

Sonie sat beside him.

“What do you want?” Mr. Konneh asked.

“I want to talk to you about how you treat your customers,” Sonie said, looking straight into Mr. Konneh's eyes.

“I don't have time for that,” Mr. Konneh said. “Bizess is bizness.”

“That true,” Sonie said. “But I think it will be better if you talk to the people good. People feeling bad the way you can talk to them. And they do not like the price of your goods.”

“Shut up,” Mr. Konneh said, and suddenly slapped Sonie. “Who do you think you are, coming to talk to me to run my own bizness! My God, look at this little thing here!”

“But, Mr. Konneh . . .” Sonie was weeping, rubbing her face where Mr. Konneh had slapped her.

“Get out of my house,” Mr. Konneh said, and stood up, shaking his fist at Sonie.

Sonie got up and fled.

Sonie told Mamie how Mr. Konneh had treated her.

“Now you got what you was looking for,” Mamie said. “Next time you will listen to me. And this time when you see Mr. Konneh you will run away.”

“Me, run away from that man?” Sonie said, and hissed her teeth. “I will never run away from him. What I will do is to teach him a lesson.”

“You just got big mouth for nothing,” Mamie said, laughing. “What kind of lesson you will teach Mr. Konneh?”

“Just wait and see,” Sonie said.

“Look, you girl you better be careful,” Mamie said.

But Sonie just turned and walked away.

The next day, a neighbor went to buy from Mr. Konneh's shop.

“How much do you sell a bag of rice, Konneh?” the neighbor, an old man, asked.

“A bag of rice is \$2, 500LD,” Mr. Konneh said.

“That is not fair,” the old man said. “Many people sell a bag of rice for only \$2,000.”

“Then go and buy from them, you foolish man,” Mr. Konneh shouted.

“You are a thief,” the old man shouted back.

“I will show you,” Mr. Konneh said. He ran from behind his counter, grabbed the old man and knocked him to the ground.

The old man began yelling at the top of his voice. Some of the neighbors rushed to Mr. Konneh's shop. Two men pulled the old man away from Mr. Konneh, who had grabbed him by the throat.

The neighbors were angry with Mr. Konneh. They said he had treated the old man badly.

“Konneh thinks he's somebody,” one man said.

“Well, we must teach him a lesson in this neighborhood,” a woman said. ‘After all, he gets his profit from the money we spend buying his things. So if he cannot treat us better, let him go somewhere else and leave this

neighborhood. He doesn't own this neighborhood, and he doesn't own us!"

Most of the people thought the woman was right. After all, they had all been treated so badly by Mr. Konneh that each of them was ready to get even with him. They decided not to buy from Mr. Konneh anymore, and whenever someone went to buy from him they spoke about Mr. Konneh so badly that people began to think Mr. Konneh was worse than the devil.

At first, Mr. Konneh tried not to pay attention to the neighbors. He told himself that people were only speaking badly about him because they were jealous and that he did not care about their gossip. So, each morning, he opened his shop and waited for customers. But no one came. Day after day, it was the same. Once or twice, Mr. Konneh thought of visiting his customers and telling them he was sorry for what he had done. But then, Mr. Konneh was not a man to agree that he was wrong. He just ignored the people and went on opening his shop each morning.

But then, his business began to "break down." There was no profit from his goods anymore because no one would buy from him. Mr. Konneh got angry and began fussing with nearly all of his neighbors. Also, he was often drunk.

One day, Mamie said to Sonie, "I feeling sorry for Mr. Konneh."

“The old man is too rude,” Sonie said. “If he had listened to me he will not have been like that today, and the way he slapped me I will never forget it.”

Mr. Konneh drank and drank and drank, until the neighbors began to fear he would drink himself to death. Sometimes he sat and talked with himself, as if he was out of his mind, and some of the neighbors began to think Mr. Konneh was crazy. But wherever Sonie saw Mr. Konneh now, she felt sorry for him.

One day she and Mamie went to visit him, because Sonie wanted to apologize for what she had done to Mr. Konneh.

“Hello Mr. Konneh,” the girls said, standing in front of the shop at a careful distance.

“Get out of here,” Mr. Konneh said, running towards the girls. “You people in this neighborhood are nothing but witches!”

The girls turned and ran.

Finally, Mr. Konneh did not have money to buy goods anymore because he had already drunk all his money. Whatever goods that were left he sold on the black market, bought more liquor, and drank. He did not even have money to pay his rent, and his landlord often threatened to throw him out of the house.

Then one morning, the neighbors got up to find Mr. Konneh packing his belongings in a pickup. Soon he left the neighborhood without as much as a word to anyone.

One of the neighbors, Mr. Fahnbulleh, went to Mr. Konneh's landlord and asked what had happened.

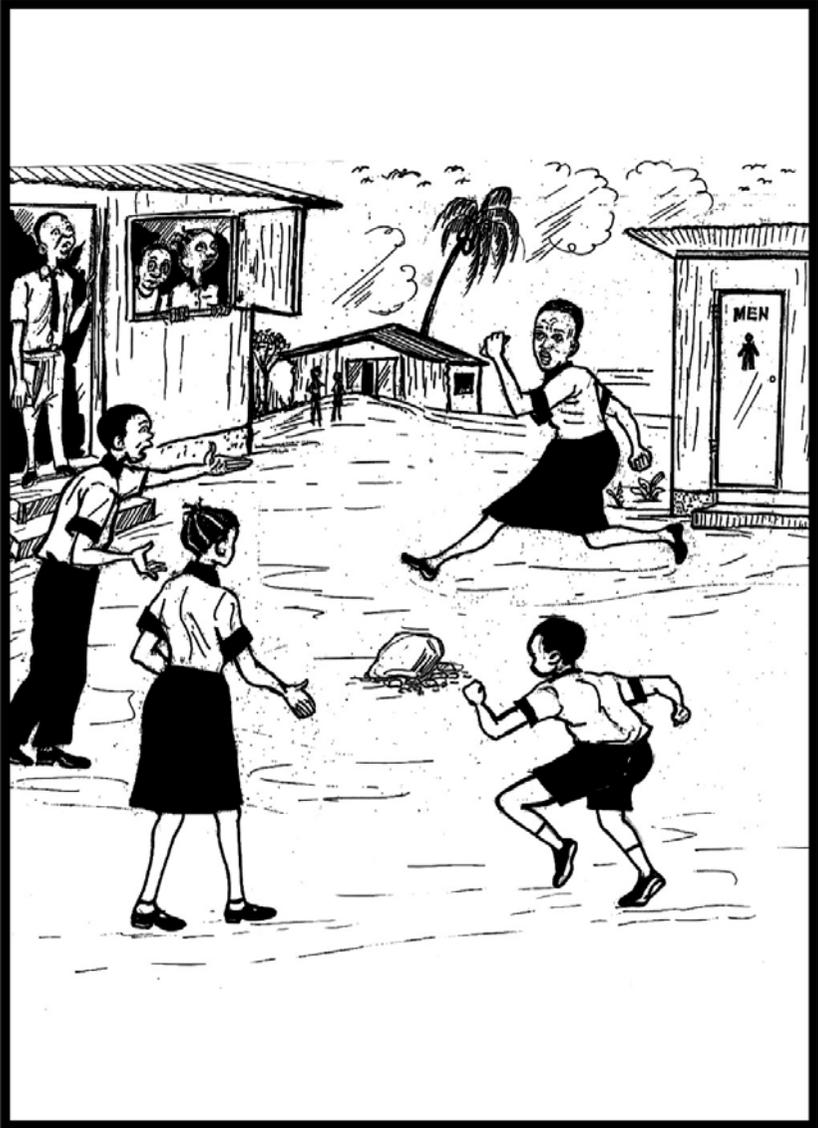
“He cannot pay his rent,” the landlord said. “So, I threw him out of my house.”

“Well, the man deserves it,” Mr. Fahnbulleh said, “if you come to think of how he treats people.”

## Questions

1. *Write three things the neighbors did not like about Mr. Konneh.*
2. *Do you think Sonie did the right thing by telling Mr. Konneh to treat his customers well?*
3. *Mr. Konneh said, "Business is business." What do you think he meant by this?*
4. *Write down the reasons why you think most people sell their goods at very high prices?*
5. *The neighbors decided not to buy from Mr. Konneh's shop. Do you think this was a good way to handle the problem with Mr. Konneh? What would you have done in this situation?*
6. *Mr. Konneh drank more and more alcohol. Why do you think some people take in alcohol and drugs when they have problems? How can these things affect your health and relationship with others?*





## Chapter Four

One morning, Sonie went to use the school's bathroom.

"There's a genie in the bathroom," Sonie said. Suddenly she came running out of the bathroom, yelling at the top of her voice.

All the students became afraid. They ran out of their classrooms at once, screaming at the top of their voice.

The next day none of the students came to school. They said the genie was hiding in the school's bathroom. It would catch them.

Mrs. Gray went to visit some of the students. She told them that she had gone into the bathroom herself.

"Did you see the genie?" one of the students, Miatta, asked Mrs. Gray.

"I did not see a genie," Mrs. Gray said.

"But Sonie said she saw it," Miatta said.

"That isn't true," Mrs. Gray said, shaking her head. "There's no genie in the bathroom at all."

“Well, the students would only believe you if they go into the bathroom to see for themselves,” Miatta said.

“Why don't you do it?” Mrs. Gray asked.

“I am too afraid,” Miatta said. “But you and I can go to some of the students' houses and see which one of them would be brave enough to go into the bathroom.”

“Yes, but first I would like to see Sonie herself,” Mrs. Gray said. “She was the one who caused all this trouble.”

Miatta and Mrs. Gray went to Sonie's house.

“Did you really see a genie in the bathroom, Sonie?” Mrs Gray asked.

“I told you I saw a genie,” Sonie said.

“All right you should prove it,” Miatta said.

“I don't have anything to prove,” Sonie shouted, “And if you don't believe me, that your bizness.”

Mrs. Gray sighed, and then she and Miatta went from one student's house to another. But even though Mrs. Gray told them that she had gone into the bathroom herself and had not seen a genie, the students would not believe her.

“But why would Sonie say such a thing like that?” one of the students, Peter, asked. “What does she have to gain from it?”

“Who knows?” said, Gayedou, another student.

“I guess she's just making a big joke, and what fun she must think it is, scaring everybody!” Mrs. Gray said.

The students thought about this for a long moment. Then Samuel, a tall boy of 15, said, “Yes, I think Sonie might be playing a joke. Sometimes she plays jokes like that. One day, on our way from school, Sonie told me that there was a snake on the road. I was so afraid I did not want to use the road anymore. But there was no other road to use. So, I finally used that road. To my surprise there was no snake on the road at all. I looked back, and saw Sonie laughing at me.”

“Then she might have done the same thing about the bathroom,” one of the students, Weah, said.

“It's true,” Mrs. Gray said. “But one of you needs to go into the bathroom to prove that Sonie has been joking with us. Samuel, would you like to volunteer?”

“No problem,” Samuel said. “But I am very afraid of a genie, and even if Sonie is only telling a joke I still feel afraid,”

“It's true,” Mrs. Gray said. “But if you don't prove that Sonie is not telling the truth she will do this over and over. Someone has to stop her.”

The students all agreed.

The next day, they stood on the outskirts of the schoolyard as Samuel, looking very afraid, went to the school's bathroom on tiptoes. All the students held their breath, afraid for Samuel and trembling. Some of them covered their hands with their eyes, for they did not want to see the genie. Finally, Samuel went into the bathroom. There was a long silence, and the students waited, wondering if Samuel was dead already.

Suddenly Samuel came running out of the bathroom, yelling at the top of his voice. The students all broke into a run, running as best they could and screaming at the top of their lungs.

Suddenly Samuel stopped and fell into a burst of laughter, holding his sides.

Mrs. Gray, who had not run along with the students, stood laughing and shaking her head.

At a distance, the students stopped, and looked back. There Samuel was, alive and laughing at them! One by one, the students came to Samuel, wondering if he had seen the genie or not.

"Did you see a genie in the bathroom?" one of the students asked.

"No, there's no genie in the bathroom," Samuel said, still laughing. "Sonie was trying to fool us. That was all."

Then Samuel led the whole group, including Mrs. Gray, to see for themselves. And when they had all gone into the bathroom and not seen a genie, they also came outside laughing so hard they thought their sides would burst.

.The next day, everyone, including Sonie, went back to class.

“Why did you say you saw a genie in the bathroom, Sonie?” Mrs. Gray asked.

“I was only joking,” Sonie said, smiling.

“Well, as a punishment for lying and scaring everybody,” Mrs. Gray said, “for three weeks you will sweep the classroom. You hear?”

Sonie nodded her head, feeling sorry for what she had done.

Mrs. Gray said, “Sonie told us a practical joke. Does anyone know what a practical joke is?”

“Yes,” Miatta said.

“Tell the class, Miatta,” Mrs. Gray said.

“A practical joke is when someone makes another person or other people look foolish,” Miatta said.

“Yes, and that is what happened on Campus,” Mrs. Gray said. “If Samuel had not gone into the bathroom, and

then each of us to see for ourselves, we all would have still believed Sonie and looked foolish, isn't?"

The class nodded.

## **Questions**

1. *Why do you think Sonie decided to play a joke on her classmates?*
2. *Was this a good thing to do? Why? How do you think her friends felt?*
3. *Do you think Sonie's classmates will believe her, the next time she tells them something even if she is saying the truth? Why?*
4. *Write a short paragraph describing your experience when you tricked someone or someone one deceived you.*



## Chapter Five

One day, Deddeh came to visit Sonie, just after school had closed for the year.

“Your father is sick in the country o, Sonie,” Deddeh said.

“What happened to him?” Sonie asked.

“Your father has malaria,” Deddeh told her.

Sonie thought about this for a while. Ever since she came to Monrovia, she had not seen her parents and wanted very much to see them. But traveling to Voinjama cost a lot of money, and she did not have the fare. But now that her father was sick, she had to do something, and quickly.

Although the money she was keeping at the Susu club was barely enough to pay her school fees for the next school term, she decided to use it for transport fare to see her father. Still, the money could only pay for her fare to Voinjama and not for her return to Monrovia. She went to the man who owned the Susu club.

“My father is sick, Mr. Forkpa,” she said. “Can you please loan me some money. I will pay when I come back from Voinjama.”

“No problem,” Mr. Forkpa said. “But remember that when I loan you money, you must pay interest when you come to return the money.”

“How much interest is on \$500?”

“If I give you \$100,” Mr. Forkpa said, “you will pay an interest of \$25. Twenty-five dollars times five is \$125. That's the interest money on \$500.”

“All right,” said Sonie, and nodded her head.

Mr. Forkpa gave Sonie the money. Two days later, she left for Voinjama carrying some gifts for her parents.

Three days later, the bus stopped in Voinjama. At the parking lot was Sonie's mother. There was Sakor, too. They were all very happy to see each other. Finally, they left the parking lot and went home.

At Sonie's parents' hut her father was happy to see her, too. They hugged each other and wept.

Sonie had brought many things for her parents. There was medicine for malaria, clothes, and shoes. She had also brought mosquito nets. She hung one of the nets around Papa's bed. She did the same for Mama and Sakor.

Each day, Sonie cooked and helped take care of her father. Sometimes she told her parents about the non-formal education class that she had gone to in Monrovia and how much she had learned. She said that she wanted to

practice some of the things she had learned and wondered if the villagers would like it.

“Maybe they will listen to you,” her mother said. “But remember that most people in these villages are all about their tradition. Sometimes they will not like what you tell them, and that could put you in trouble.”

But Sonie thought that living in the country was a good time to practice what she had learned. Besides, she wanted to show people how “kwee” she was.

### Questions

1. Was it a wise thing for Sonie to use the money she was saving for her school fees to travel to Voinjama to see her sick father?

2. Do you think Sonie might have gone back to her village if her father was not sick? Why?

3. Why do you think some people are not willing to go back to their village when they come to a big city?

4. Knowing that Sonie fled from village due to her refusal to marry the chief, do you think she might have been afraid of going back? Why?

5. What do you think will happen to her? What might the chief and the community say or do to all?

6. Sonie decided to teach the villagers some of the new things she learned from her school. Do you think they will accept her ideas? Why or Why not?





## Chapter Six

One day, most of the villagers fell ill from runny stomach. A few of the villagers died. Some of the people thought it was witchcraft, and they went to the medicine men and zoes to help them.

One afternoon, as Sonie and a group of women were returning from the village creek where they had gone to fetch water, one of the women said, "The people fini killing my baby now. The child's stomach was running until he died. The medicine man told me the witches in this place ate my child. But one day God will move from behind them, and that will be the day we will put an end to every witch in this village."

"This village is full of so-so witchcraft," another woman said. "They keep making people stomach run, just to kill them for nothing."

"I don't think that witchcraft doing this thing," Sonie said, when she had listened to the women for a long time.

"Where are you coming from and saying that it is not witchcraft that is doing this thing?" another woman asked, glaring at Sonie.

"She just coming from Monrovia," another said. "She thinks the book she learn there can do everything."

“That's not what I am thinking,” Sonie said. “In Monrovia, I went to a class that taught me about this kind of running stomach. They said sometimes it happens if people drink dirty water.”

“Shut up,” an older woman said.

“But . . .” Sonie was saying.

“I say shut up! What do you mean it happens when people drink dirty water? Do you mean that the water we drink from the creek is dirty? You know how long we been drinking this creek water, you foolish girl?”

“Please don't get vex with me yah,” Sonie said. “I was just talking something. If you don't agree with it, that it there. But don't come fuss with me.”

“It had better be, and close your mouth,” said the woman.

Sonie came home and told her parents what had happened at the creek and how badly the women had treated her.

“I told you that you had better be careful,” her mother said. “People here are too tied to their tradition. Every time something happens, they believe what tradition says, even if it is a lie.”

“But I just wanted to tell them to try and boil their drinking water if their stomach starts running,” Sonie said.

“That was what I learned at that nonformal education class. And they could even put Clorox in the water if they don't boil it.”

“Well, they have gone to the zoes to solve their problems now,” her father said, “and if you tell them to boil their drinking water or put Clorox in it they will not listen.”

## Questions

1. *On their way from the creek to fetch water, Sonie told the women that drinking dirty causes running stomach. Was it the right place to discuss what she had learned in her school with the other women?*
2. *Write two reasons why you think the women insulted Sonie and refused to listen to her?*
3. *If you were Sonie, write how you would have told the women that drinking unclean water is not good for their health?*
4. *The women said that witchcrafts were responsible for their children's death in the village. Do you think this statement is true? Why?*
5. *When people are sick, do you think they should go and see a witch doctor or go to the clinic or hospital? Why?*





## Chapter Seven

One evening, Sakor came running into the hut.

“What is it, Sakor?” Sonie asked.

“Our uncle is very sick,” Sakor said.

“Oh, I will see him at once,” Sonie said.

She and Sakor ran back to their Uncle's hut.

The old man was lying on a mat. He was very sick, sweating and trembling.

“What's wrong with Uncle?” Sonie asked her Uncle's wife.

“He says his spat sweet like sugar,” she told Sonie. “He says it is the same thing with his pepe.”

Sonie thought about this for a long time. At the nonformal education class she had heard about such a sickness, and she knew it was called diabetes.

“I think the sickness Uncle get is diabetes,” she told her uncle's wife. “It is a bad sickness, and people can be taking the treatment forever. But they can live and be looking well.”

“They have medicine for it?” her uncle's wife asked.

“Yes, they have the medicine,” Sonie said. “But Uncle has to travel to Monrovia to get the medicine.”

“I see, and thank you, Sonie,” said her uncle's wife.

That day Sonie helped take her uncle to the parking lot, so that he could go to the hospital in Monrovia. Her parents were there, too, and they gave a little money to Uncle for fare, even though Uncle had enough money from the rice and cassava tubers he had sold from his farm.

Finally, when the old man had boarded the bus along with his wife, Sonie and her parents said goodbyes, and the bus drove away from the parking lot.

On their way home, her mother said, “You learn plenty things at that nonformal education class o, Sonie, and I will be happy if you was a doctor.”

“Yes,” Sonie said, smiling. “But it hard to be a doctor, Ma.”

“Wat thing make it hard?” her father asked.

“That the money to go to school to study,” Sonie said. “And sometimes some people go to different country to study to be doctors. We don't get dat kinda money, Papa.”

Her father thought about this for a while, then he said, “But your Ma and myself can try. We will help you go to school from making the farm. And when you study hard, you can get scholarship to go to study in different country.”

“That's true, and I want to go to school and study hard,” Sonie said. “But in Monrovia I sending myself to school and I don't get the money self.”

“We will help you,” her mother said. “Besides you our daughter. That you will take care of us tomorrow.”

Sonie hugged her parents, feeling very happy.

## **Questions**

1. *Sonie was neither a nurse nor a doctor but said that her uncle had diabetes. How did she know this?*
2. *Was she right to ask her uncle to go to Monrovia to seek medical help?*
3. *Sonie's mother wants her to be a doctor. Knowing that Sonie is still in a NFE class and has no money do you think this is possible? Explain your answer?*
4. *Do you think it is right to tell the uncle to take medicine if she knows he won't have money?*
5. *What would you have done if you were in Sonie's position?*





## Chapter Eight

One day, Sonie and Papa went on the farm. On the way they passed Mr. Kolleh's farm. Mr. Kolleh was burning the brush. He said he would like to plant rice for the new season.

"It is not good to burn the bush," Sonie said to Mr. Kolleh.

Mr. Kolleh laughed. "Well, Sonie, that is how most of us here clear brush. We have done so for a long time now. Besides, in most countries there's hardly a forest."

"But that does not mean it is good," Sonie said.

"How is that so?" Mr. Kolleh asked.

"Let me tell you," Sonie said. "Burning the forests or cutting down the trees is bad because it helps spoil the environment and kill the animals. And it is good to keep our animals, and not destroy them. They are very precious. They are part of our custom, and would you like to destroy the custom you have been born to?"

Mr. Kolleh thought about this for a while, then he said, "Of course not. Without my custom or tradition I would be nothing."

“And that is why we should not burn the bush, so that we can care for our animals, the same way we care for our tradition,” Sonie said.

“It is true,” Mr. Kolleh said. “But how does burning the bush destroy the environment as well?”

“It destroys the environment the same way it destroys the animals, or worse,” Sonie said. “If you cut down the trees from the forest, the animals will not have anywhere else to go and most of them will get killed by squatters.”

“I see,” Mr. Kolleh said, and thanked Sonie.

But as Sonie and her father walked away, Mr. Kolleh could not help laughing. He did not really see how burning the bush could destroy anything. As for the animals, he thought, “Killing them does not matter. Those groundhogs and opossums keep eating my rice and wasting my hard work, and the birds are even worse!”

## **Questions**

1. *Do you agree with Sonie that burning the bush is not a good farming method? Why?*
2. *Mr. Kollie said, "Without my custom and tradition I am nothing." What do you think he meant by this?*
3. *Why do you think it is important to protect our forest and wildlife (animals)?*
4. *What do you think will happen in the future if we destroy our forest?*
5. *What are some things we can do to help save our forest and environment?*
6. *Why do you think Mr. Kollie laughed as he went? Do you think he will change his farming practices? Why?*



## Chapter Nine

One evening, Mr. Bob Kollie came to visit Papa. Mr. Kollie told Papa that snails and grasshoppers were eating his crops. He said he would buy medicine to spray his crops, so that it would kill the snails and other pests.

Sonie heard Mr. Kollie. She came out of her room, and then sat beside Papa.

“It is not good to spray your crops with pesticides, Mr. Kollie,” she said.

Mr. Kollie looked at Sonie and frowned. He had heard that this little girl, who had just come from the city, often meddled in people's business as if she knew everything.

“What do you mean that spraying my crops is bad?” he asked, still frowning.

“If you spray the crops, ” Sonie said, “you will get sick. The medicine will be on the crops when you eat it.”

“Shut up,” Mr. Kollie said, and then turned to Sonie's father. “Kemou, I must advise you about your daughter here. Since she came from Monrovia, she has been behaving in this place like every one of us in these villages doesn't know anything at all. Now, what kind of bizness is

that? We have lived here and been doing just like we have always done, and no one has told us to do this or that. So, who does she think she is? Is she better than our ancestors?"

Sonie's father tried to explain that Sonie only wanted to help people, and that she had gone to some school in Monrovia where she had been taught about sick people and even her neighborhood. But Mr. Kollie cut him off, and stood up.

"I am ashamed of you, Kemou," he thundered. "Imagine a grown man neglecting his tradition for nonsense he hears from his daughter!"

Sucking his teeth, Mr. Kollie stormed out of the hut.

When he had left, Sonie's father said, "I think you should stop telling people what to do, Sonie. If you don't do so, you will just make enemies for us in these villages."

Sonie nodded, tears streaming from her eyes. She wanted so much to help others, but they just wouldn't listen. Worse, they even thought she was a bad girl.

But then, one day a group of people from an NGO came to Voinjama. There were doctors and teachers among them. They visited the villages teaching the people one thing and another. Some of them to began a nonformal education, and a few of the villagers went there. Sonie was

very glad, since now the villagers would get taught the very things she had learned and would see how good they were.

At one of the classes, which Mr. Kollie himself attended, though he had never wanted to, the villagers were taught about using ducks and chickens to kill pests from their crops. They were told that it was harmful to spray their crops with pesticides, as that would cause illness.

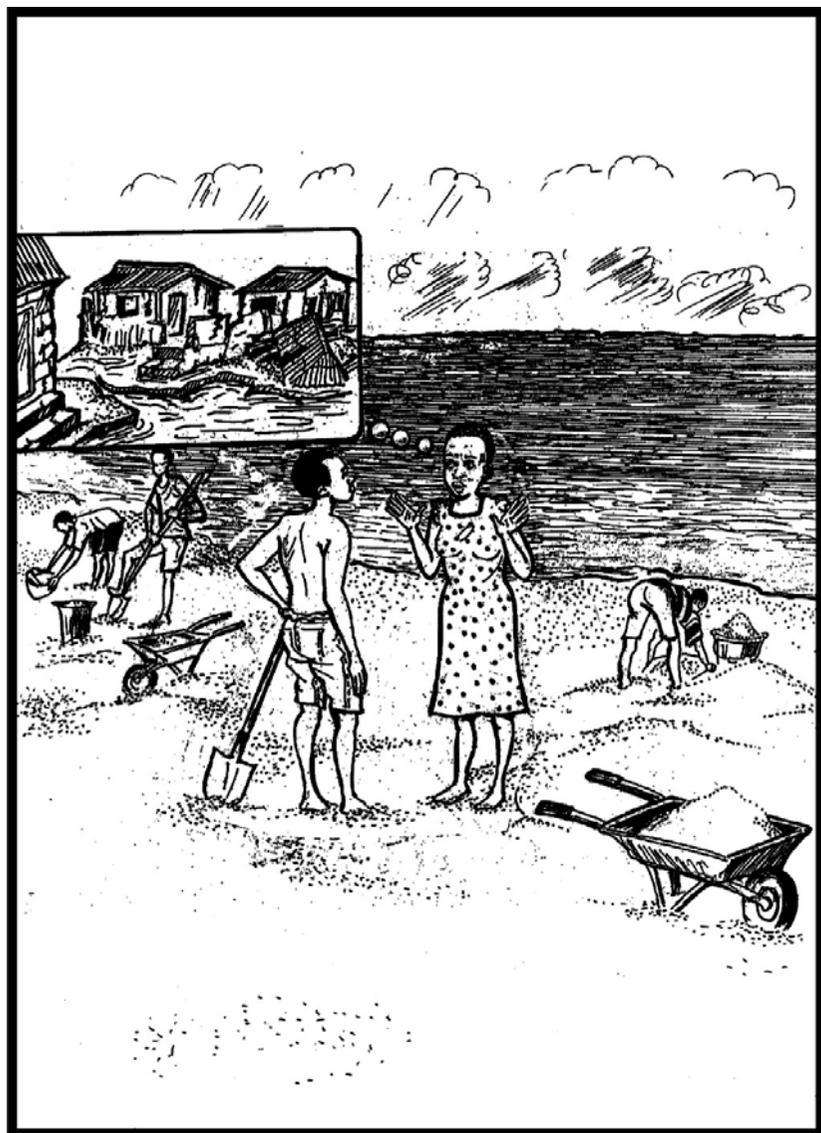
The next day, when Sonie was going home from the creek where she had been watching clothes, Mr. Kollie stopped her on the road.

“I went to that nonformal education class yesterday, Sonie,” he said, smiling. “I learned the very thing you had told me about not spraying my crops.”

“So, why were you vex with me when I told you?” Sonie said, smiling.

“I did not know that it was good, and I am sorry,” Mr. Kollie, smiling back. “Now that I know, I am going to try it.”

He did. For as he put it, he felt he had learned from people who were educated and knew better than he. Besides he could not afford to buy medicine to spray his crops, and he had a lot of chickens and ducks already.



## Chapter Ten

One day, Sonie went on a trip to Sinoe County. The trip had been sponsored by the NGO people who came to Voinjama, and Sonie went along with a group of people. They were all serving as volunteers, though. How happy Sonie was! Now she would get a good chance helping others with what she had learned.

One sunny afternoon, three days after Sonie arrived in Sinoe, she went along with one of the villagers, a girl of her age, to buy coconuts on the beach.

On the beach they met a group of men mining sand.

Sonie went to one of the men. "Hello, old man," she said.

"Hello, small girl," the man said. The man stood up. He wiped the sweat from his face.

"I would like to talk to you, old man," Sonie said. "My name is Sonie."

"My name is Sampson," the man said.

"It is not good to take sand from the beach, Mr. Sampson," Sonie said.

“Well, it helps feed my family,” Sampson said. “Besides I have heard that sand mining is common in Monrovia.”

“Yes,” Sonie said. “But in Monrovia sand mining is destroying the houses along the beach. Do you know West Point?”

“Yes, I have lived there before,” Sampson said.

“If you go there now,” Sonie said, “the sea is washing away most of the houses along the beach, and people do not have anywhere else to live. The sand keeps the sea from reaching the houses, and if you take them from the beach, they cannot save the houses from the sea.”

Sampson thought about this for a moment. Then he said, “I agree with you, but if people do not have jobs these are some of the things they do, even if it is bad. People have to feed their families, they cannot sit down and fold their hands and starve to death. They must do something to eat, and I am doing this too eat, too.”

Gripping his shovel, Sampson began to pile up the sand again.

Sonie shook her head and left. But she knew that people like Sampson had little or no choice not to mine sand or not. They did not have jobs, as Sampson put it, and they had to do something or they would not survive.

Finally, after a week of being in Sinoe, Sonie got ready to return to Voinjama. In her volunteer work she had helped teach some of the villagers, distribute mosquito nets and reproductive health materials, and even helped start a nonformal education class in Sasstown, Sinoe County.

“I am happy for all the experience,” Sonie told another volunteer, Cumba, who had become her best friend.

“Myself I am happy for everything,” Cumba said. “One day the NGO people will leave this country, and we will be here to help our own people using the experience we learn from them.”

At last, waving goodbye to a crowd of villagers who had come to see she, the other volunteers, and the NGO people off, she boarded a bus and left for Voinjama.

## **Questions**

1. *Why do you think it is good for young people to serve as volunteers?*
2. *Have you had an experience of doing voluntary services in your community? Describe what you did?*
3. *How do you think mining sand from the beach affects the environment?*
4. *Mr. Sampson says he mines sand from the beach to feed his family. Should people do things that affect the environment in a negative way in order to survive? State your reason, why or why not?*





## Chapter Eleven

In the center of the village, there was a palaver hut. From the towns and villages around Voinjama people came to the palaver hut. They talked about many things. They also talked about their problems. Sonie liked to listen to the villagers.

One day, two men came to the palaver hut. The men had fought with each other. One of them had hurt the other man with a knife, and the man who had been hurt was bleeding badly.

The man who had been hurt was very angry. He shouted and shook his fists, swearing he would hurt the other man back.

Sonie got up. "My friend," she said to the man who was hurt, "I am sorry you are hurt. But don't hurt the other man, too."

"Shut up," the man shouted, and took an angry step toward Sonie. "A woman telling me what to do! Can you imagine? And least of all, a small girl like you!"

"Keep it quiet, Moses," the village chief said. "Even if she is a woman or a small girl, that doesn't mean she cannot have a say in this matter. Besides this little girl, Sonie, has been helpful to the village, even though most people have

hardly listened to her. For example, the very things she learned at her nonformal education class and tried to teach us were recently taught by those same NGO people who came here. Well, I attended the classes and I now practice what they have taught me, and I have found it much better. And you must remember that what was taught at that nonformal education class, such as not using pesticides to kill pests from our crops, goes as far back as our ancestors. For during their days they had no pesticides at all, using ducks and chickens to rid their crops of grasshoppers and other pests, until some foreigners brought this dangerous pesticide that has been done more harm than good. Now, I will have her speak, whether you want her to or not.” Turning to Sonie, the chief said, “Go on and say what you like.”

Sonie nodded, unable to believe her ears that the village chief could have confidence in her at all.

“If you hurt him back,” Sonie said, “it would make things worse. The man might hurt you back, too.”

“All right, what can I do?” the man asked.

“Here are the elders, and the village chief, too,” Sonie said. “Tell them what happened. When they have listened to you and the man, they will know who is right or wrong. Then they will solve the palaver.”

At once, the crowd in the palaver hut began clapping for Sonie, and a few people patted her on the back.

Finally, when everyone was quiet, the chief said, "You heard what Sonie said, Moses, and now tell me if she is right or wrong."

"She is right," Moses said.

"And tell me what does being a woman have to do with being a leader," the chief said. "For even though Sonie is a woman, she talks wisely, and could be a leader as much as any man and could even have the right to fix this palaver."

"Well, I was wrong," was all Moses could say.

"Keep that in mind," the chief said. "Woman or not, no one should be looked down upon. Now about this matter between you and this man. What really happened?"

The men told the elders what happened. Moses said that Fumba, the man who had hurt him, had stolen some acres of his land. When he went to Fumba and complained, Fumba got him into a fight.

"Is that so?" Fumba, the village chief asked.

"That is not true," Fumba said. "The land is not for Moses."

Moses said, "I have got witness to prove that the land is for me."

"Where are the witnesses that would prove that the land belongs to you?" the chief asked.

Moses called his witnesses. They all said that he owned the land and that Fumba had stolen it.

"I have witnesses, too," Fumba.

And so Fumba's witnesses were called. However, Fumba's witnesses did not all say the same thing. One of them said he thought Fumba owned the land, since he had always lived there. Another said that Fumba had only told him he owned the land but had not shown him any proof. The last man said that he did not know whether Fumba owned the land or not and that he had only heard about it at the palaver hut.

"These are your witnesses, Fumba," the chief said, "and they say different things, unlike Moses' witnesses. So, the land is not yours but Moses'. And now that you have hurt him, you should pay a fine. Afterwards, you will take Moses to hospital and pay for the cost."

That brought the matter to an end, and the villagers left the palaver.

Lying away that night, Sonie couldn't help feeling proud of herself and how much she had grown, helping

settle matters at the palaver hut and being respectful to the chief and elders. Looking back at the joke she had once played on her classmates at school, she fell into laughter.

## **Questions**

- 1. Moses and Fumba fought over a piece of land. Was this a good way to settle their problem? Why?*
- 2. Instead of fighting, what would you have done to solve the problem if you were either Moses or Fumba?*
- 3. Fumba told Sonie to shut up and not tell him what to do because she was a woman. Was he right to say this? Why? Should women be treated equally as men in our communities? Explain your answer?*
- 4. The chief said that Fumba was wrong and should pay a fine and take Moses to the hospital. Do you think this was the right decision taken by the chief? Why?*





## Chapter Twelve

One day, a man and his wife came to the palaver hut. The man had beaten his wife. The wife said she did not want the man anymore.

“That is not the way for a man and woman to solve their palaver,” the chief said.

“My husband likes to beat me,” the woman said.

“My wife does not listen to me,” the man said.

“Well, we all make palaver in our house,” the chief said. “Even me and my wife can make fuss. So you can't just break up your marriage because of these small, small things.” And then the chief turned to Sonie. “Sonie, what do you think?” he asked.

Sonie stood up, ever proud of herself. “ This man and his wife came to the palaver hut to solve their palaver. That is good. Also, they could have gone to the man's or the woman's people.”

“Yes,” the chief said.

“But it's bad for a man to beat his wife,” Sonie said. “Also, it is bad for a woman not to listen to her husband. But if they have a palaver, they should not fight.”

“You don't know my wife,” the man said. “Because if you know her, you will not talk like that. She wild woman.”

“And that you the wild man,” the woman shouted. “You lazy. You don't even have a farm, then you calling yourself a man. Look at him!”

“You see how she talks!” the man said, “I told yor she's wild. By the time we move from here, she will finish beating me up.”

“And I will break your head for you,” the woman said.

“Aha, now you see what I am talking about,” the man said.

“You both keep it quiet and listen to Sonie,' the chief, as nearly everyone at the palaver hut fell into laughter. Even Sonie couldn't help smiling.

“Well, no matter what happens,” Sonie said, “a man and a woman should be careful not to break their marriage. And if they have children, they should be all the more careful. Because if there is a man and a woman to take care of the children, life for them will be better. They will go to school and find enough food to eat. But if they break up and only the man or the woman is left to take care of the children, the children will suffer.”

The crowd nodded, and there were murmurs of agreement.

Turning to the woman, Sonie said, "I am not living with you and your husband, and I can't say that you are wrong or he is right. But what I want to say is that you two should patch the palaver and go back to the house."

"And how do we patch up the palaver?" the woman asked.

"You should tell each other you are sorry for what happen," Sonie said.

"I will not tell him sorry," the woman said.

"I will not tell you sorry either," the man said.

"You will both do it, or I will have you banished from this village," the chief thundered.

That frightened the man and the woman, and they murmured apologies to each other.

Then Sonie said, "That is not all. The chief will have some people watch both of you. They will make sure that each of you does your duty as a wife and a husband."

The man and woman liked what Sonie had said but they were not sure how to solve their problems without fighting. The chief talked to the man and his wife.

“You should both be patient with each other,” he said, “for that is the only way you will live together. Also, you must learn to forgive each other and never hold a grudge”

“Thank you, chief,” the man said, nodding his head.

“I hear you, chief,” the woman said, also nodding.

With that, the chief dismissed the man and his wife.

## **Questions**

1. *Why do you think some men beat their wives and some women beat their husbands?*
2. *Some women believe that being beaten by their husbands is a sign of love. Do you think this is true? Why?*
3. *What happens to the children in the home where there is always quarrel and fighting?*
4. *Have you had an experience of being beaten by your husband? What do you think should be done to people who beat up their spouses?*
5. *What should husband and wife do to avoid quarrel and palaver in their homes?*



## Chapter Thirteen

One day, a man went to steal a chicken. He was caught. The villagers got together. Some of them wanted to kill the man. Others wanted to beat him. But some people did not want to kill the man or beat him either. They said they should carry him to the palaver hut.

Most of the villagers agreed, and the man was taken to the man to the palaver hut.

The chief said, "What this man has done is bad. But we must not kill him. That will be bad, too."

Sonie got up. "It is better that we take the man to the police," she said. "That is what the law says."

"No, let us kill him," a man said.

"No, let us just beat him," a woman said.

Sonie looked at the woman. "If this man were your son, would you kill him for stealing?"

The woman did not answer. No one else said anything either. But they all agreed that Sonie was right.

"It is good to obey the laws," they said.

Then the people took the man to the police station where he was put in jail.

Sonie's new role as a leader in Voinjama was very exciting. But she often went to help her parents on the farm also, planting cabbage and cassava and rice. She knew that when she would return to Monrovia she would have to pay school fees, continue her petty trading, and take care of her baby, which she had left with Deddeh. Besides, Mama and Papa were becoming old, and soon they would not be able to farm anymore. She would have to go to school, find a job, and help them while Sakor would work on the farm.

Finally, Sonie was ready to leave for Monrovia, after spending three weeks in Voinjama. To honor her departure, the chief and elders had a lavish party at the palaver hut. A cultural troupe sang and danced, and the drums pounded. The crowd cheered. Sonie, smiling broadly, joined the dancing and the singing until she was breathless. Then the chief gave her a gown, while some of the villagers brought gifts of new rice, chickens, palm oil, and many other things.

Finally it was all over, and the chief said, "Sonie has set an example for all women and men in our towns and villagers, and I hope others would learn from her. But now that she is leaving, I feel very sad. She has been a good leader, and I would want nothing better than to have her settle matters for us all. But she must go to school and learn much more, and I want all of us to wish her the best of luck. And you must know that she wants to be a doctor!"

There was a thunder of approval, and the villagers could never have been more proud of Sonie.

At last, Sonie stood up and said, "I thank you all, and I promise to come back here and help everyone as best I can, even though I will be away in Monrovia and will later go to college. But you must remember my heart will be with you always!"

Again the crowd shouted with joy.

Then Sonie was led to the packing lot where she boarded a bus for Monrovia, while the villagers still sang and danced around her. Finally the bus started and drove away, and the crowd waved goodbyes until the bus disappeared round a bend in the road.

## Questions

1. *What do you think is the meaning of mob justice or violence? Is it a good way to solve a problem?*
2. *What happens when people steal money that belongs to everybody from a group or government? What do you think should happen to such people?*
3. *Have you stolen from someone or being stolen from before? How did you feel? Explain.*
4. *Is taking bribe the same as stealing? Why do you think some people take bribe or steal?*
5. *As Sonie prepares to go back to Monrovia, the chief honored Sonie by having a party and giving her a gown and gifts. Do you think this was the same chief whose proposal to marry Sonie made her to flee her village? Why?*
6. *What lessons have you learned from reading Sonie's Story?*
7. *Sonie did many things in her community and village to help improve the lives others. From reading this story, write one thing you will do in your community to help others live a better life?*