



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



Sonie's Story 3

For New Readers



Sonie Achieves Her Goal!

**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, there is 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.

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 to 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 benefiting 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.

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

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

The 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 in use 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' everyday lives into the written register of English used in the classroom. Without specific bridging, learners sometimes find

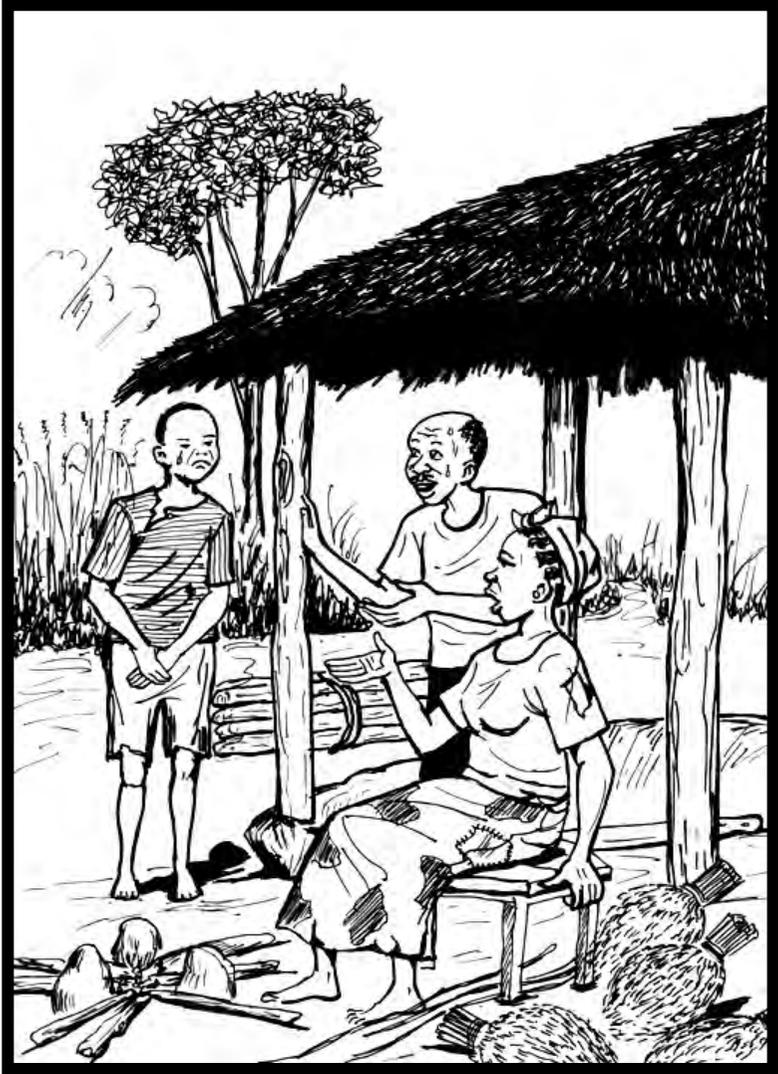
it difficult to attain competency in a written register of English that is unfamiliar.

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 3

For New Readers

1

Sarkor is Sad

It is early.

The sun has not come up.

Sonie's Mama and Papa go to their farm
in the forest.

Sonie's little brother Sarkor is with them.

They reach the farm.

Mama lights a fire.

She wants to cook.

Sarkor goes for water.

Papa goes to cut sticks.

Papa must set traps.

He wants to catch the birds.

The birds are eating Papa's rice.

Sarkor gets the water.

But then he runs away.

He is crying.

He hides in the bush.

Mama and Papa look for Sarkor.

"Sarkor," Papa calls.

Sarkor does not come.

It is late

when Sarkor comes back.

Papa and Mama see Sarkor.

“Why did you hide?” Papa asks.

“I want to go to Sonie,” Sarkor says.

He is weeping.

“But Sonie has a baby,” Papa says.

“She is going to school.”

Sarkor is weeping.

Papa looks at Sarkor for a long time.

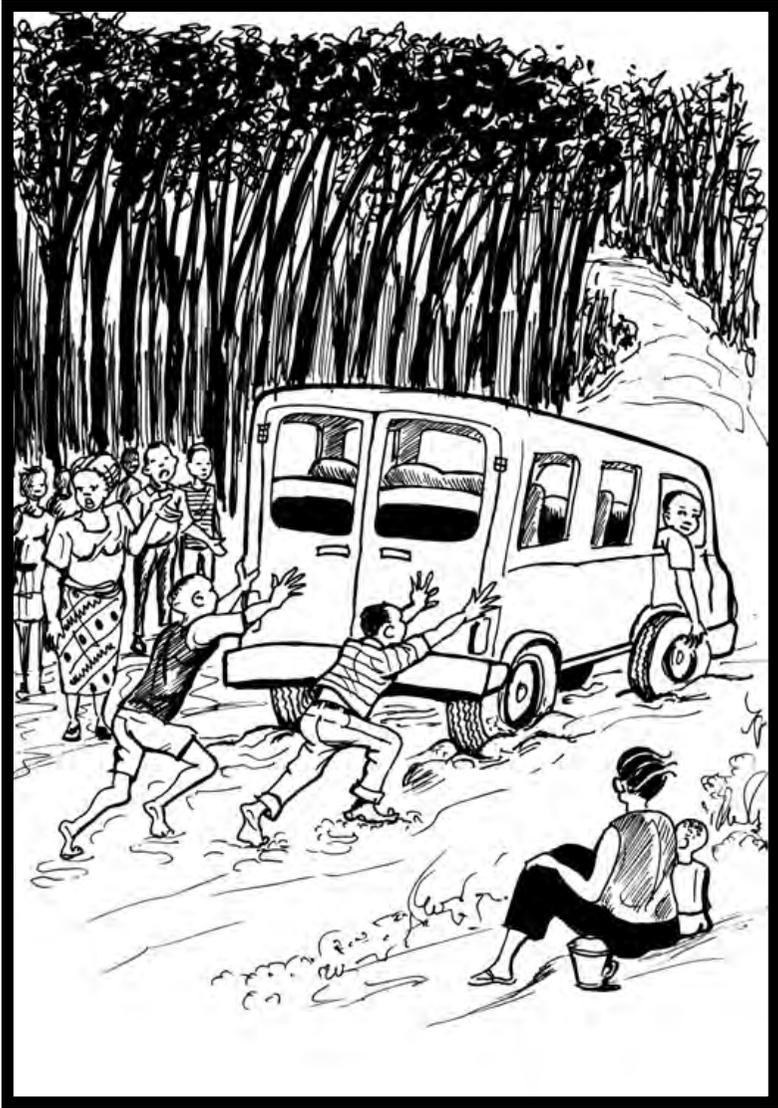
“All right, you will go to Sonie,” Papa says.

Sarkor smiles.

Mama smiles.

Sarkor hugs Papa.

He is happy.



Together We Are Strong

Sarkor and Uncle Tarnue go to the bus stop.

Mama and Papa go with Sarkor and Uncle.

Sarkor has a bag.

His clothes are in the bag.

Sarkor and Uncle sit on the bus.

Papa and Mama say goodbye.

Sarkor and Uncle say goodbye, too.

The bus goes away.

It will take two days

To get from Voinjama to Monrovia.

It is the rainy season.

The streets are bad.

The bus stops on the street.

The bus cannot go.

The bus is in the mud.

The people get out of the bus.

They are angry.

They shout at the driver.

The driver pushes the bus.

The people look at him.

They do not help.

“It is not our job,” the people say.

“We must help the driver,” says an old man.

“Or we will not get to Monrovia.”

Finally the people help the driver.

They push and push.

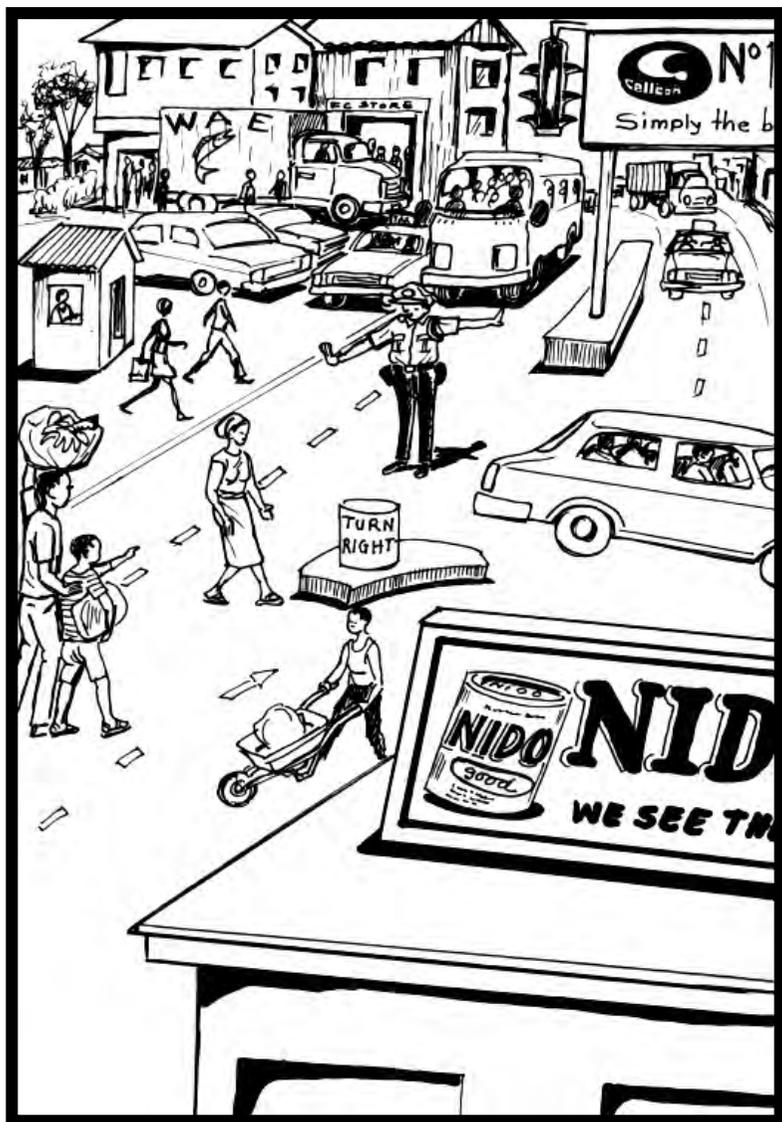
The bus gets out of the mud.

The bus goes.

The old man sings,

*“Two sticks betta than one,
Together we are strong;
O my daughter, O my son,*

*Join together an’ be strong.
Together we are strong,
Together we are strong.”*



3

The City is So Big

Uncle and Sarkor get to Monrovia.

The bus stops at Red Light Market.

Red Light Market is far

from Sonie's house.

There are many cars.

There are many people.

The cars go fast.

The people walk fast.

Uncle does not know

what to do in the big city.

"Where is the bus stop?" Uncle Tarnue asks a man.

"That is the bus stop," the man says.

Uncle Tarnue and Sarkor go to the bus stop.

There are many people at the bus stop.

A bus comes.

The people push to get on the bus.

They push and push.

They go so fast.

Finally, Uncle Tarnue and Sarkor
push into the bus.

The bus stops.

Uncle Tarnue and Sarkor get out.

They stand by the street.

They want to cross the street.

But the cars go so fast.

Many cars pass by.

The city is so big.

How will they find Sonie?



Uncle and Sarkor Find Sonie

Uncle and Sarkor walk.

Finally they see Sonie's house.

But they do not cross the street.

There are too many cars.

Sonie sees Uncle Tarnue and Sarkor.

She is so happy.

She runs across the street.

She takes Uncle and Sarkor to her house.

"Why is Sarkor here?"

"He was sad.

He wanted to see you,"

Uncle Tarnue says.

Sonie is not happy.

She has to work.

She has to go to school.

She does not have money.

But Sarkor is so sad.

He wants to stay.

“Sarkor will stay,” Sonie says.

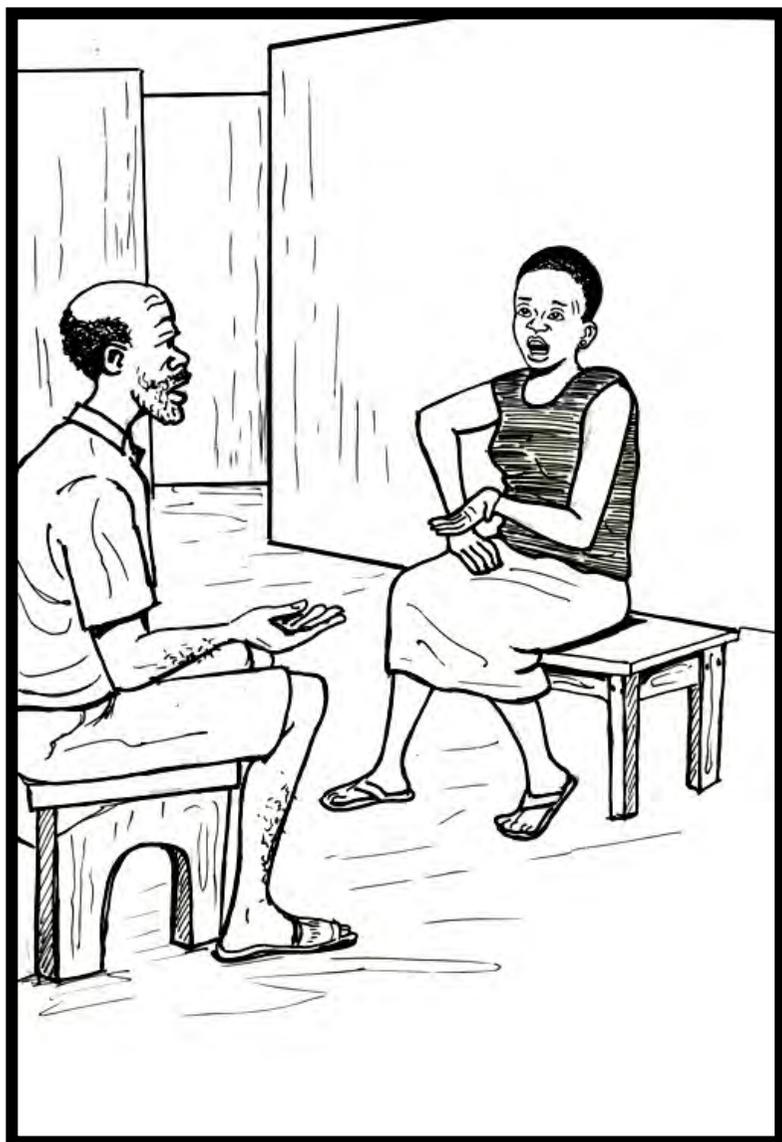
Uncle Tarnue smiles.

Sarkor smiles.

He is happy.

Uncle Tarnue goes back to the country.

He goes in the bus.



Sonie Needs Money

Mr. Zayzay comes to see Sonie.

She did not pay her rent

for 3 months.

“You must pay your rent,” Mr. Zayzay says.

“Please give me time.”

Sonie begs Mr. Zayzay.

“I do not want to put you out” says Mr. Zayzay

“I will give you one month and 2 weeks”.

Sonie goes to the Susu club.

“Can you give me some money

for the rent, Musa,” Sonie says.

“I will pay it back.”

Musa is not happy.

But finally he gives Sonie the money.

Sonie is happy

But she will have to sell a lot.

to pay her rent.



6

Stand up for Justice

Sonie and Sarkor are walking.

They are going to sell

small small things in the market.

They see many people in the street.

The people are hitting a fat man.

Sonie sees the man is Johnson.

He was her boyfriend.

The man is weeping.

He has blood on him.

“Do not kill the man,” Sonie says.

“You should call the police.”

“We want to kill the man **now**,” they say.

“The man took our money.”

They are very mad.

They are now a “mob”.

They get more and more mad.

“The law says you cannot kill a man
in the street,” says Sonie.

“And he is my Pa,” Sonie lies.

The people think the man is Sonie’s Pa.

They feel bad for Sonie.

They stop.

Sonie calls the police.

“There is a mob,” she says.

The police come.

“It is bad to kill in the street,” the police say.

“Mobs are bad.

You must call the police.

You can go to jail

If you are in a mob,” the police say.

The people run away.

The police take the fat man away.

He will go to court.

They will decide what to do.



Sellers Must Be Careful

Sonie and Sarkor go to eat.

A fat man talks to Sonie.

The man is a bad man.

The man wants to lie down with Sonie.

Sonie yells.

A crowd comes.

Sonie tells the people.

The fat man runs away.

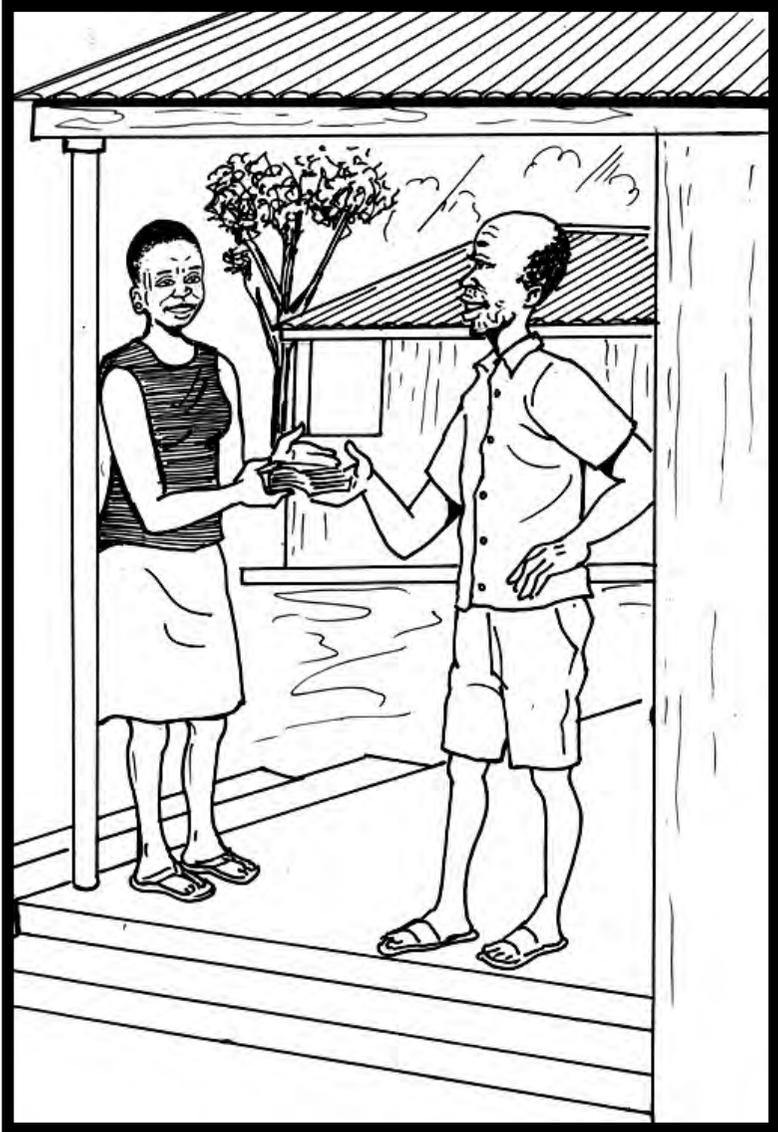
“You must be careful, little girl,” a woman says.

“Girls that sell small small things

Must be careful.”

“All right, Ma,” Sonie says.

Sonie and Sarkor go away.



8

Hard Times

It is hard.

Sonie and Sarkor sell every day.

Many days they eat only farina.

Sonie must save the money

to pay the rent.

Finally, Sonie pays her rent.

Mr. Zayzay says she can keep her house.

Sonie is happy.

But now she must pay the Susu man.



Things Get Better

Sonie and Sarkor work hard.

After some months

Sonie pays the Susu man.

She goes to see Aunty Deddeh.

“I want to sell food,” Sonie tells Deddeh.

“But I want to go to school, too.

Can you help me?”

“Yes,” Aunty Deddeh says, “I will help you.”

Sonie uses her money to make a food stall.

She will make and sell food.

Sonie goes to school too.

Sonie likes to read.

She likes to learn.

Sonie can spell many words.

The teacher loves Sonie.

She works hard and wants to learn.



10

Sonie Reaches Her Goal

Sonie opened her food stall.

She went to high school.

She worked hard for two long years.

Finally a happy day comes.

Sonie finishes high school.

Mama and Papa come from the village.

They are so happy.

There is a big party.

Many people are at the party.

Sonie takes a picture

with all her family and friends.

“Thank you for helping me,,” she says.

She weeps with joy.

That night Sonie is in bed.

She thinks about the NGO school.

Now she knows about malaria and HIV.

She knows how to run a small business.

She knows how to read and write.

To make a good life

is hard work.

But now life is good.

She smiles.

She goes to sleep.

Tomorrow is a new day.