



**USAID**  
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# ***Sonie Story 2***

## ***For New Readers***



### ***Sonie Becomes a Leader in her Community***

**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 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 II**

## **1**

### **Learning for Everyday Life**

Sonie does not have money

for public school fees.

So she goes to an NGO class.

It is free.

At the class are many women.

Some of the women have babies.

At the class is a teacher.

His name is Mr. Fallah.

Mr. Fallah teaches about things

to make everyday life better.

One day Mr. Fallah asked,

“What is the best way to feed a baby?”

“I buy milk to feed my baby.

That is the best way,” Kema says.

“Why is that?” Mr. Fallah asks.

“I want to look like a young girl,” Kema says.

“I want to have iron tittis.

Our men like that.”

The class laughs.

Some of the women agree with Kema.

They say powder milk is better.

They want to look like young girls too.

But some of the women do not agree.

They say breast milk is better for their babies.

“Why is that?” Mr. Fallah asks.

Ma Lorpu says, "My baby is fat.

My baby is healthy.

She does not get sick.

And I am poor.

I cannot buy milk every day.

So I use breast milk."

"That is good," Mr. Fallah says.

"Breast milk is better.

It has many important things in it

to make a baby strong.

And sometimes the powder milk

goes bad.

It can make the baby sick.

So every mother should use breast milk."

Mr. Fallah gives the women mosquito nets.

“Is it good to use mosquito nets?” he asks.

Sonie says, “No, it is good to use mosquito spray.”

“Why is that?” Mr. Fallah asks.

“The spray kills the mosquitoes,” Sonie says.

Some of the women agree with Sonie.

Others do not.

Thelma says Sonie is not right.

“Why?” Mr. Fallah asks.

Thelma says, “The net is cheap.

And I am poor.

I cannot buy mosquito spray every week.

I can keep the net for a long time.”

“Yes,” Mr. Fallah says.

“And the spray has things in it  
that can make you sick.

A mosquito net is better.”

So the women put their money together.

And they buy many nets.

The class comes to an end.

The women have learned many things.

Will they use what they have learned?

Sonie is not sure.

Thelma is not sure, too.

“It is true what you say,” she says.

“The things they told us  
can 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 a 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.*





## 2

### **Sonie Learns to Pay Attention**

Finally, Sonie saves the money  
for junior high school.

She buys copy books, pencils and a pair of  
shoes.

She goes to school.

There is a teacher at the school.

Her name is Mrs. Gray.

But Sonie is not happy at school.

She doesn't listen.

She doesn't pay attention.

She looks out the window.

She draws in her copybooks.

John is a boy  
in Sonie's class.

John likes to make friends.

One day, John says, "Hello, Sonie."

"Hello," Sonie says.

"Can we be friends?" John asks.

"Leave me alone," Sonie says.

She walks away.

John is sad.

One day Mrs. Gray gives a math test.

Sonie cheats on the test.

Mrs. Gray sends her out.

Sonie feels very bad about it.

She weeps.

After school John goes to Sonie.

“Sorry, Sonie,” he says.

Sonie does not answer.

She is angry.

“I will help with your lessons,” John says.

“We can study after school.”

Sonie just looks at John.

John shakes his head.

“What do you want?” Sonie asks.

“Do you just want a woman?”

“No, it is not like that.

I just want us to be friends,” John says.

“All right,” Sonie finally says.

“Let’s be friends.”

John smiles.

Sonie smiles too.

John and Sonie become friends.

Sonie and John begin to study together.

Sonie begins to study hard.

Finally, Mrs. Gray gives a science test.

Sonie does a good job on the test.

Mrs. Gray is happy.

“Thank you, Sonie,” she says.

I am happy you are studying now.”

“Thank you, too, Mrs. Gray,” Sonie says.

Sonie is so happy.

She thanks John, too.

“You should be happy.

You are working hard now.” says John.

“You are paying attention.”

“You helped me learn  
to pay attention,” says Sonie.  
“I am happy we are friends,”

## Questions

1. *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 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?*



### 3

## The Mean Man

One day Mrs. Gray asks students in the class to tell a story.

Sonie tells this story.

Her story is about Mr. Martin Konneh.

Mr. Konneh lived near Sonie's house.

Mr. Konneh had a shop.

But he was mean.

He did not talk to people well.

He shouted at them.

He asked people to pay

too much money for his food.

One day he hit a man.

The people stopped going to Mr. Konneh's shop.

They said he was bad.

Mr. Konneh did not care.

He opened his shop every day.

But nobody came to buy.

Mr. Konneh was angry.

He was sad, too.

He started to drink.

He drank more and more.

Finally, he had no money

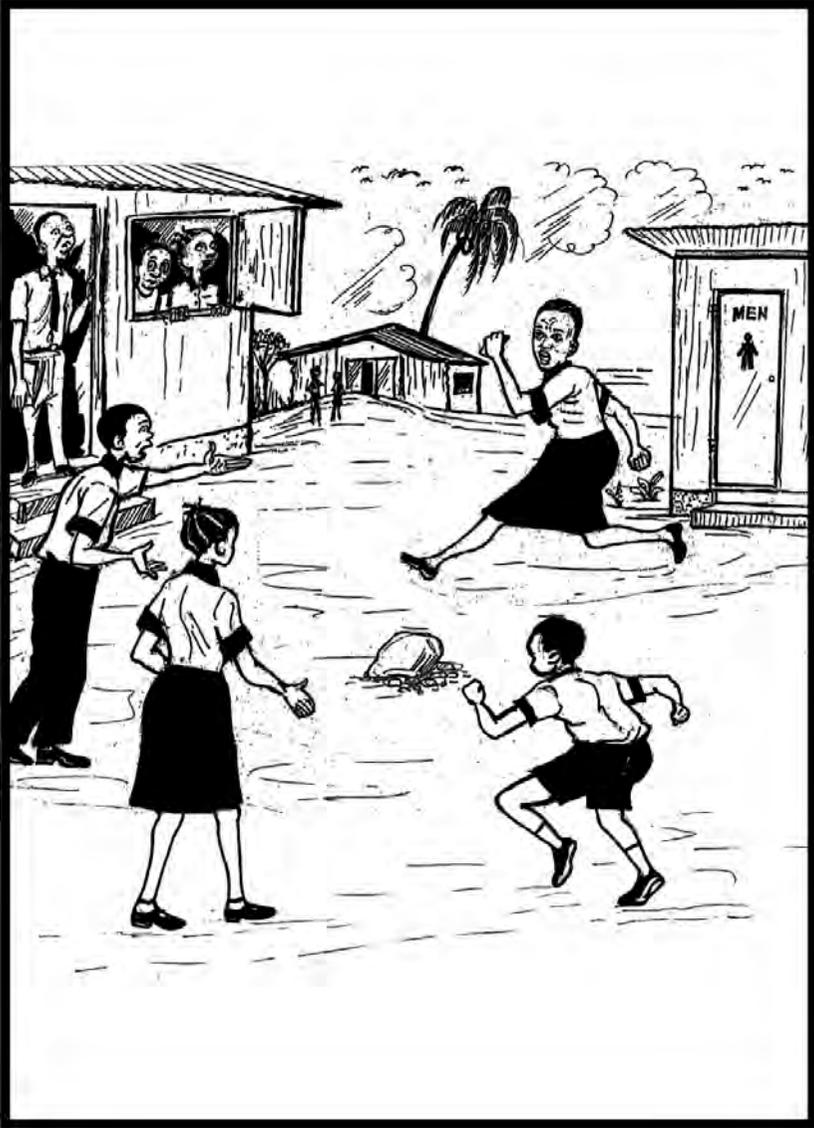
to pay the rent.

He had to pack his things and leave.

Nobody ever saw him again.

## *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. Write down the reasons why you think most people sell their goods at very high prices?*
- 4. 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?*
- 5. 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?*



## 4

### **A Lie is Not a Joke**

One morning at school

Sonie ran out of the bathroom.

She said she saw a genie.

All the students ran away, too.

The next day nobody came to school.

They were afraid.

Mrs. Gray believed Sonie had played

a “practical joke”

on her friends.

Mrs. Gray went to visit the students.

She said there is no genie at school.

“All right, we will go to school,”

some of the students said.

But others said they would not.

Now this “practical joke” was no longer funny.

Students were afraid.

And they were missing school.

Finally, Samuel said he would go to school.

He said he would look in the bathroom.

Samuel went back to school.

He went into the bathroom.

He stayed a long time in the bathroom.

Many students said the genie had got Samuel.

Then Samuel ran out.

The students ran away.

Samuel stopped and laughed

“There is no genie in the bathroom,” he said.

“Sonie told us a lie.”

Finally, all the students came back to school.

But Mrs. Gray was not happy.

When Sonie went back to school,

Mrs. Gray asked, “Why did you lie to us, Sonie?”

“At first I thought it was funny,” said Sonie.

“And after I told it,

I didn’t know how to take it back.

I am so sorry,” Sonie said.

“What you did was very bad,” said Mrs. Gray.

“It is very mean to make people afraid even as a practical joke.

For three weeks you will sweep the class,”  
Mrs. Grays said.

Sonie learned her lesson.

She did not lie again.

## *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.*



## 5

### **Sonie's Pa is Sick**

School closes.

Aunty Deddeh comes to visit Sonie.

She says Sonie's Papa is sick.

Sonie goes to Mr. Forkpa.

She tells him her Pa is sick.

"Please give me money to take the bus to see my Pa," Sonie says.

Mr. Forkpa gives Sonie \$500.

"You must bring my money back," he says.

"And you must add \$125 on it," he says.

"That is interest."

"All right, Mr. Forkpa," Sonie says.

Sonie goes to the country.

Mama and Papa are happy to see her.

Sonie brings many things for them.

She brings mosquito nets.

She gives Mama and Papa clothes and shoes.

She tells them about the NGO class.

She hopes to tell the villagers, too.



## 6

### **Sonie Talks Too Much**

The villagers are sick.

Their stomachs are running.

They say it is witchcraft.

“It is not witchcraft,” Sonie says.

“Sometimes the water is dirty.

You have to boil it before you drink it.”

“It is witchcraft,” a woman says.

The women are angry with Sonie.

“You talk too much,” they say.

“You should leave us alone.”

Sonie tells Mama and Papa.

“Leave them alone,” Papa says.

“They will not listen to you.  
They will listen to the zoes.”

## *Questions*

1. *Write two reasons why you think the women refused to listen to Sonie?*
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 running stomachs 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?*



# 7

## Sonie's Uncle

Sarkor tells Sonie their Uncle is sick.

She goes to see her Uncle.

Uncle is lying on a mat.

"He says his spit is sweet," Uncle's wife says.

"He says his peepee is sweet, too."

"Uncle must go to hospital," Sonie says.

"I think he has diabetes."

Uncle gets on a bus.

He goes to Monrovia.

Sonie helps her uncle.

He takes medicine.

He gets well in the hospital.

Sonie tells Mama and Papa.

“I want you to be a doctor,” Mama says.

“It is hard,” Sonie says.

“We will try to send you to school,” Papa says.

Sonie is happy.

She hugs Mama and Papa.

## *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?*



## 8

### **Burning the Bush**

Sonie and Papa go to the farm.

They see Mr. Kolleh.

He is burning bush on his farm.

“Don’t burn the bush,” Sonie says.

“That is how I make my farm,” Mr. Kolleh says.

“But it is not good,” Sonie says.

“Why is that?” Mr. Kolleh asks.

“If you burn the bush, it is bad for the environment.

And the animals will die,” Sonie says.

“They will not have anywhere to go.”

“That is true,” Mr. Kolleh says.

Sonie and Papa go away.

“I will still burn the bush,” Mr. Kolleh says.

“If I don’t, the animals will eat my rice.

To kill a few animals will not matter.”

## *Questions*

- 1. Do you agree with Sonie that burning the bush is not a good farming method? Why?*
- 2. Why do you think it is important to protect our forest and wildlife (animals)?*
- 3. What do you think will happen in the future if we destroy our forest?*
- 4. What are some things we can do to help save our forest and environment?*
- 5. Do you think Mr Kollie will change his farming practices? Why?*



## 9

### **What is Good for the Crops?**

Mr. Kollie comes to visit Papa.

“Snails and insects are eating my crops,” he says.

“I want to spray my crops.”

“Do not spray your crops,” Sonie says.

“Why is that?” Mr. Kollie asks.

“If you eat the crops,” Sonie says,

“You will get sick.”

“Shut up,” Mr. Kollie says.

“No, Mr. Kollie, you must listen to Sonie,”

Papa says.

“She knows about these things.

She has gone to school for it.”

“Leave me alone,” Mr. Kollie says.

“Sonie is a small girl.

I will not listen to her.”

Mr. Kollie is angry.

He gets up and goes away.



# 10

## Hard Choices

Sonie goes to Sinoe.

She goes with many people

from the NGO.

One day she goes to the beach.

She sees a man.

The man's name is Mr. Sampson.

He is taking sand from the beach.

"Do not take sand from the beach,"

Sonie says.

"If you take sand from the beach,

the sea will break the houses down.

The sand helps to stop the sea."

“But I have to eat,” the man says.

“I have to have food.

And I can’t get other jobs.”

Sonie walks away sadly.

The man shakes his head.

He knows taking sand is bad for the beach.

But he has no choice.

If he does not work

his family will not eat.

“What can I do?” he says.

“When I have no choice.”

## *Questions*

- 1. How do you think mining sand from the beach affects the environment?*
- 2. 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?*



# 11

## Sonie and the Palava

In the village is a palava hut.

Many people come to the palava hut.

They talk about their problems.

Two men come to the palava hut.

The men were fighting.

One has hurt the other one

with a knife.

“I will hurt him back,” the man says.

“I will hurt this man with a knife, too.”

“Do not hurt him back,” Sonie says.

“If you do, he will hurt you back.”

“Let the chief and the elders help you.”

The men are angry.

At first the men do not want  
to listen to a woman.

But they do listen.

They do not hurt each other.

They go to listen to the chief and elders.

The village chief is happy with Sonie.

Sonie has helped the village  
in many ways.

He gives Sonie many gifts.

He thanks her.

## *Questions*

- 1. The men 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?*
- 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?*



## 12

### **The Children Will Suffer**

One day a man and his wife  
come to the palava hut.

They always fight with each other.

The man is angry.

The woman is angry, too.

“She does not listen to me,” the man says.

“He beats me,” the woman says.

“Sonie, please talk to them,” the chief says.

“You must love each other,” Sonie says.

“A man and his wife must stay together.

Or the children will suffer.

You must learn to forgive each other.”

The man and his wife listen.

They hug each other.

Then they go home.

## *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?*



# 13

## **Sonie Goes Back to Monrovia**

A man goes to the palava hut.

He stole a chicken.

The people want to kill him.

“Don’t kill the man,” Sonie said.

“Take him to the police.”

“No, we will beat him,” the crowd says.

“We will beat him until he dies.”

“If this were your son, would you kill him?”

Sonie asked.

The crowd was silent.

The people think Sonie is right.

They do not kill him.

They take the man to the police.

It is time for Sonie to go back to Monrovia.

The villagers are happy.

They give Sonie rice.

They give her chickens.

They give her a gown.

Sonie dances with the villagers.

She says goodbye.

Finally, she gets onto the bus.

Papa and Mama wave good-bye.

The villagers wave, too.

The bus goes away.

Sonie must go back to school.



## 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?*