

# Broken Promise



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Written by  
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Illustrated by  
**Obuseli C. Parkinson**  
**Sahid Nasralla**



## NOTES FOR TEACHERS WITH EXERCISES

Use these suggestions where appropriate to help students connect to, and think critically and analytically about the stories, poems, and articles.

### Before Reading

- Briefly describe the content of the piece and its main theme.
- Ask students to discuss similar experiences of their own, including how any problems they encountered were solved.

### When Reading

- Choose appropriate places to pause and invite the students to compare what is happening in the piece to their real life experiences.
- Before the end of the piece, pause to allow students to predict its outcome. Ask how this would compare to their own experiences.

### After Reading

Ask the students to discuss in small groups, or with a partner.

### Broken Promise

1. What did Kolubah promise?
2. List two things about her life.
3. What are the similarities between Yammah and Weato?
4. What was Yammah's dream?
5. "My daughter, a love story." What does this mean?
6. What bad news did she receive?
7. What are your views on the promise she made when a child?

### Going Back to School

1. What hasn't changed since she went to school?
2. How do you think the school would feel about her mother? How would she feel about her mother?

### Let's Talk: Family Plan

**Activity A:** Divide the class into groups and prepare a list of topics:

- a. What changes?
  - b. The dangers of the world.
  - c. How safe is the world?
  - d. What can we do to make the world a better place?
- Have a 5-minute discussion.

**Activity B:** As a class, have students share their experiences.



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MUHAMMAD  
BROKEN PROMISE

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MUHAMMAD  
BROKEN PROMISE

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This book is due for return on or before  
Last date shown above



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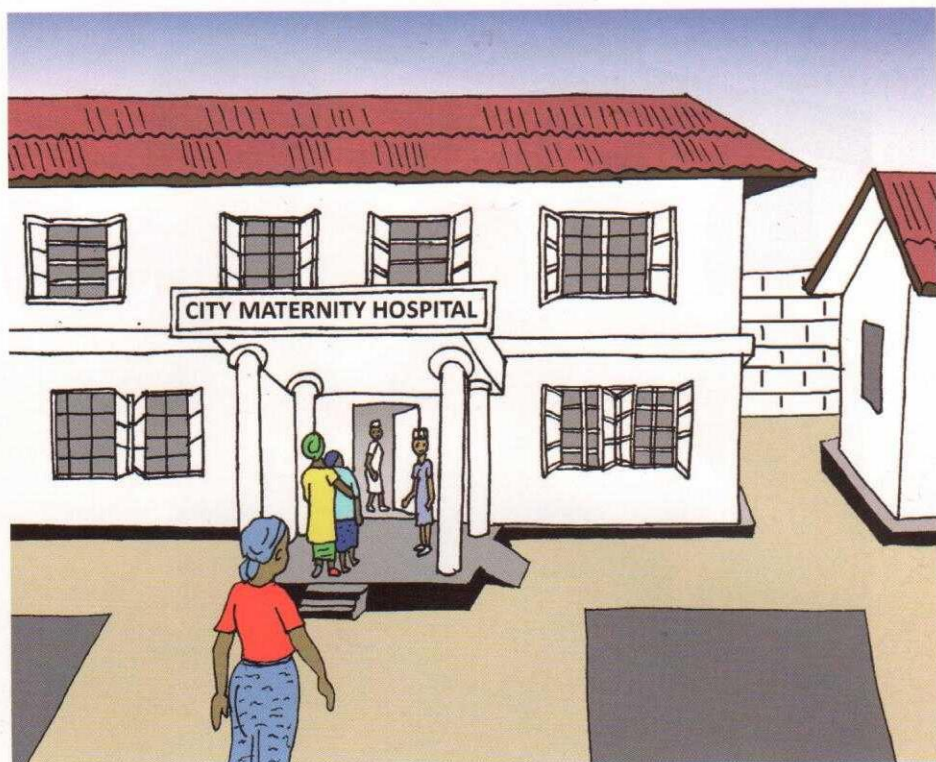
## Broken Promise

*by Saydia Muhammad*

Things were not looking good for Yammah. She was at the City Maternity Hospital in Monrovia. She had been in labour for several hours. There was no sign that she would give birth soon.

Yammah lived in the small diamond-rich town of Belefana. She had given birth to her first child at the Belefana Hospital about a year and a half ago. With that child too she had gone into labour for hours and hours. The hospital did not have the resources to have a Caesarean section. But God had answered the family's prayers. Yammah had finally given birth to a healthy baby.

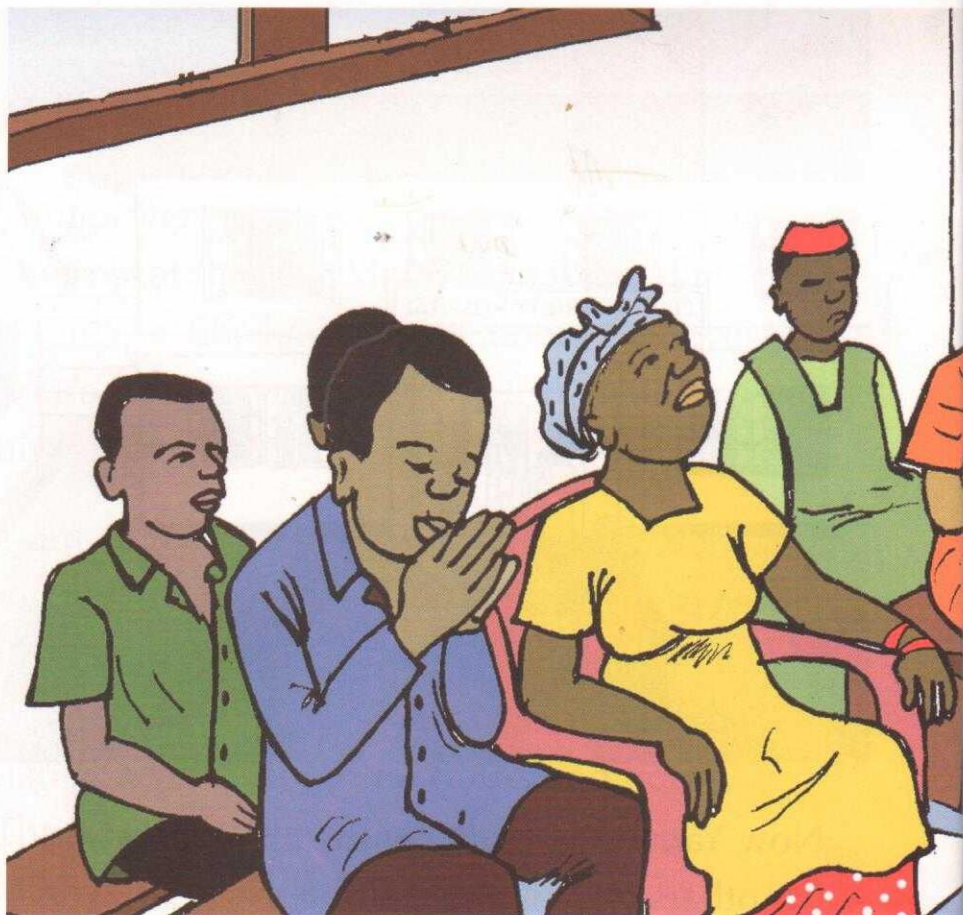
This time Weato, Yammah's mother, was ready. As soon as Yammah complained of movements in her belly, Weato, Yammah's father, Zaza, and Yammah's husband, Kolubah, had taken her to the maternity hospital in Gbanga.



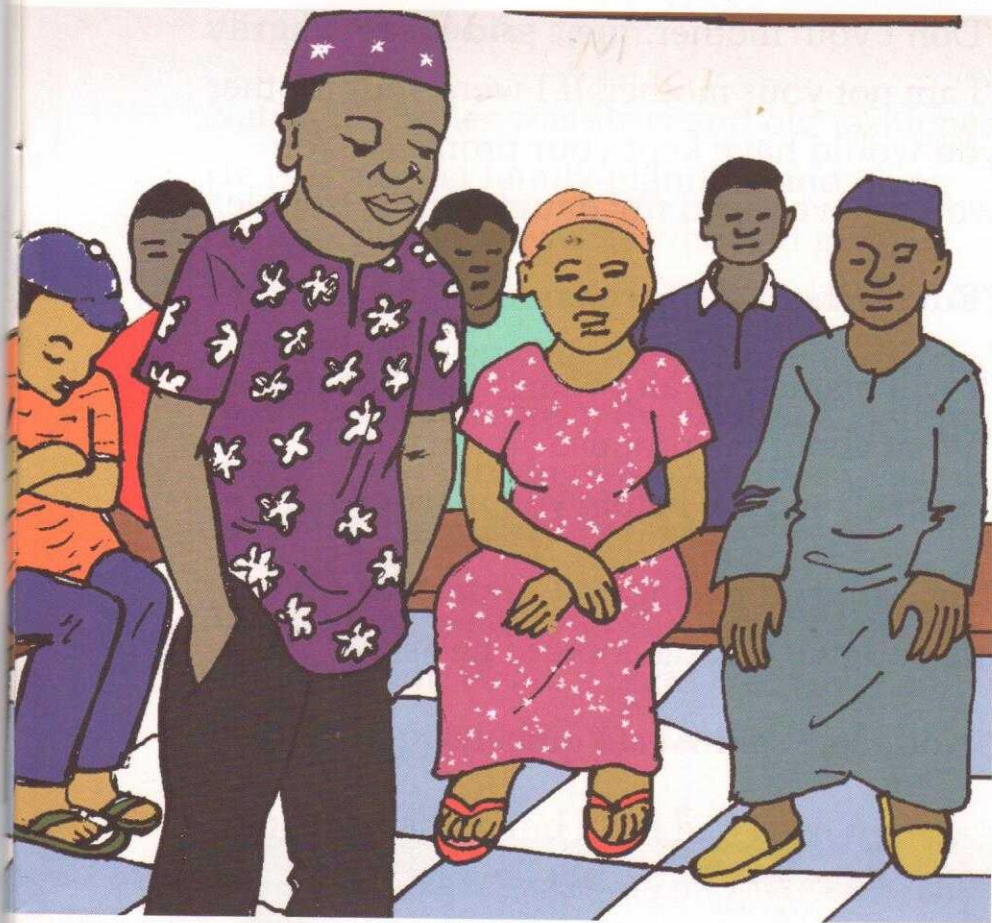
Now Yammah was in the theatre. Weato and the others were in the waiting room. Zaza was pacing back and forth. Kolubah was sitting with eyes closed, hands in front of his face, praying. Next to him in an arm chair was Weato. Her head was thrown back and she was staring up at the ceiling.

"Oh God, Oh God," Kolubah said from time to time. Each time he said that, Weato threw a cold look at him.





"Honestly, Kolubah you irritate me with this 'O God, O God' of yours." Weato said at last. She kept her voice low so that her husband would not hear her. "Just a year and a half ago we were in a similar situation. You were saying the same thing. You promised me then that this would not happen again. You



promised you would start family planning. And here we are. My daughter is not yet eighteen and she is giving birth to her second child in less than two years."

"I know I have been careless with family planning," Kolubah admitted, "but Mother, this is a time for prayer, not for accusations."



"Don't you 'mother' me," said Weato angrily.  
"I am not your mother. If I were your mother  
you would have kept your promises. You  
would have saved my daughter this trouble."

"But Mother ..."

"I will blame you all I want," said Weato.  
"What about the promise you made to  
Yammah and me before you married her?"

Zaza stopped pacing and came over. "What  
are you two talking about?" he asked.

"Nothing," said Weato quickly.





Zaza began pacing again.

Nafiastu's father was strict and old fashioned. He was against family planning and using contraceptives. It was he who had given Yammah's hand in marriage to Kolubah. He himself had been over forty when he married. Weato had been fifteen then. He saw nothing wrong with marrying his own fifteen-year old daughter to a man over thirty.

As the three waited restlessly in the hospital waiting room, Weato's mind went over all that had happened in the past.

Kolubah's father and Zaza had been friends since childhood. Zaza was happy when his friend's son asked for his daughter's hand in marriage. After completing high school, Kolubah had gone into selling farm produce. His business was doing well.

Yammah had been a brilliant 10th grade pupil. One day she came home from school to be told she was marrying Kolubah. That night, Yammah had cried until dawn.






Nafiasatu didn't go to school the following morning. She told her mother she was going to leave home and stay with a relative that could help her fulfil her dream.

"Please don't do that, my child," said Yammah's mother. "You'll break my heart and embarrass your father. This has been





our lot. I was also given to your father in marriage at your age. I had to stop schooling like you. I hadn't even reached your grade."

"Mother, I'm not you!" Yammah said. "And your time was different from ours."

"You are better off," Weato said, trying to convince her daughter. "Your husband is just over thirty years old. Your father was forty-three when he married me. You've reached 10th grade, and Kolubah is educated. Your father was completely illiterate."

"What difference does it make? I'm going to be taken out of school to bear children, cook, wash clothes and serve my husband! Mother, why can't you convince Father to let me continue my education? I told you I want to be a doctor, like Dr. Halima."

"Your father has already given his consent to the marriage. Nothing will make him change his mind. And he won't agree to any preconditions." Weato paused.





"But Kolubah does have some education," she went on thoughtfully. "So I am hoping we can strike a secret deal with him."

"What kind of deal, Mother?" Nafiastu asked eagerly.

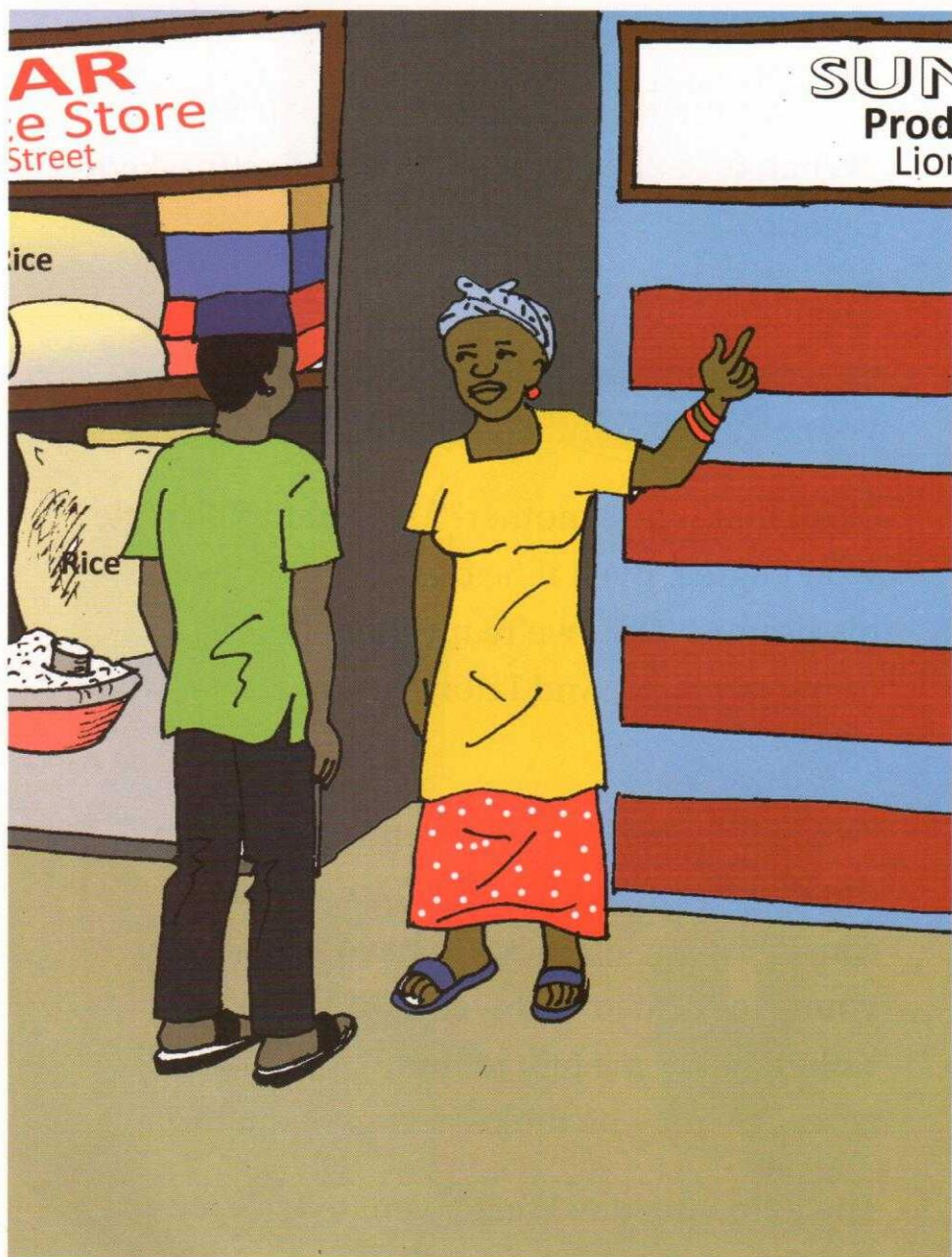
"You marry him without a fight," Weato explained, "and he allows you to continue your schooling and take your WASSCE."

"Will that work, mother?" said Yammah. "He won't agree. Even if he does, he won't keep his promise once we're married. Besides, I don't love him. And I don't want to marry now."

"My daughter, love is something we only dream about," Weato said. "You should consider yourself lucky to have a relatively young, educated and well-to-do man like Kolubah. Let me talk to him. I think he will agree. He may be the perfect gentleman."

The following day Weato went to look for Kolubah in his produce shop. He wasn't there.





The owner of a nearby shop told her Kolubah was out of town on business.

As the date for the marriage got closer, Yammah became desperate. She threatened to run away or harm herself. Her father ignored her, but her mother was worried. Now the marriage was only five days away. Weato went to look for Kolubah again. This time he was in his shop. Weato told him about her concerns for her daughter. To her delight and surprise Kolubah agreed to the deal.

"Mother, I know Yammah is unhappy with this marriage," Kolubah said. "She feels she is being forced to marry me and I don't feel good about that. But I truly love her. She is also not happy because she cannot continue her education. But I give you my word. I will let her finish senior high and I'll even support her if she wants to further her education."

Weato told her daughter the good news. Yammah doubted if Kolubah would go by his word but she felt a little more hopeful. She and Kolubah got married.



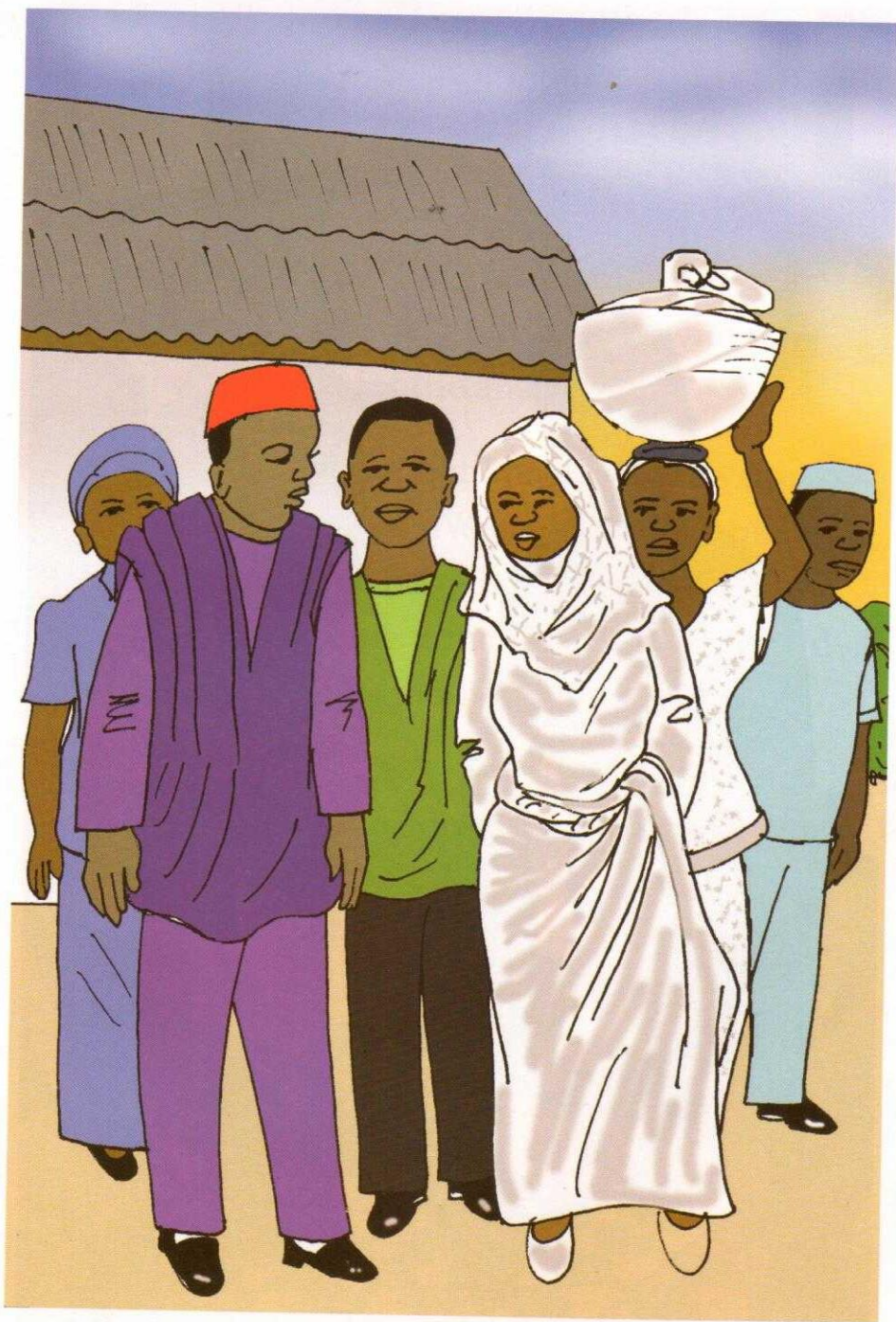
On their wedding night, Yammah asked her husband, "When am I returning to school?"

"Very soon, my dear," Kolubah assured her. But three months later, Yammah got pregnant. She cried for days.

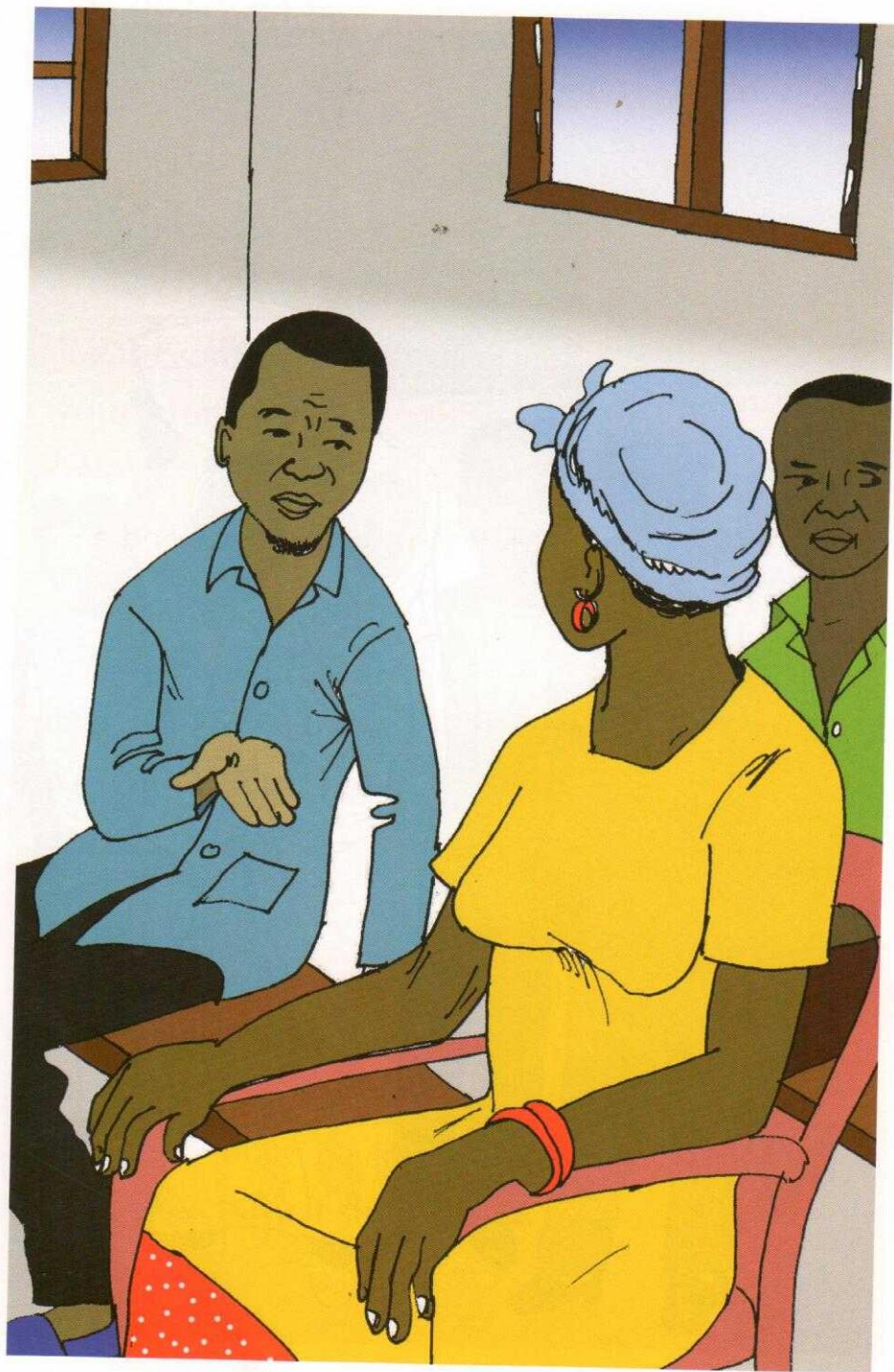
Weato confronted Kolubah. "You've broken your promise!" she said angrily. "You should have started family planning. Yammah isn't ready to have children!"

Yammah's first delivery was very difficult. The doctor said she was too young for child-bearing. Now she was pregnant again. She was fighting for her life - and the life of her baby.

"Mother, I'm sorry," said Kolubah in tears. "Let us pray hard for her and the baby. I promise you this won't happen again. This time we are going to do family planning. Yammah will go back to school. She will even go to university if she likes."







Just then a nurse entered the waiting room.

"Where are Yammah's family?" she asked.

Weato, Kolubah, and Zaza rushed over to her. "Zaza and I are the parents," said Weato.

"This is my daughter's husband. How is she and how is the baby?" She waited with a pounding heart for the answer.

"I have good news, but I have bad news, too," the nurse said. Weato's heart jumped a beat. "We lost the baby, but Yammah is fine. Yammah had some difficulty. The doctor had to decide between mother and child. She chose the mother."







Weato broke down in tears of joy. Kolubah hugged her. He shed tears of joy too. Zaza lifted his hands and gave thanks to God.

Everyone was sad about losing the baby, but they were thankful that Yammah had survived.

## Going Back to School

by Nathaniel A. Pearce

All these years yet it's still the same.

The *abc's* are still the same.

And 1-2-3 has never changed.

*It's never too late, it's never too late.*

*It's never too late to go back to school.*

The pens we had are still around.

The pencils sharpened at both ends.

The notebook pages are all still blank.

*It's never too late, it's never too late.*

*It's never too late to go back to school.*

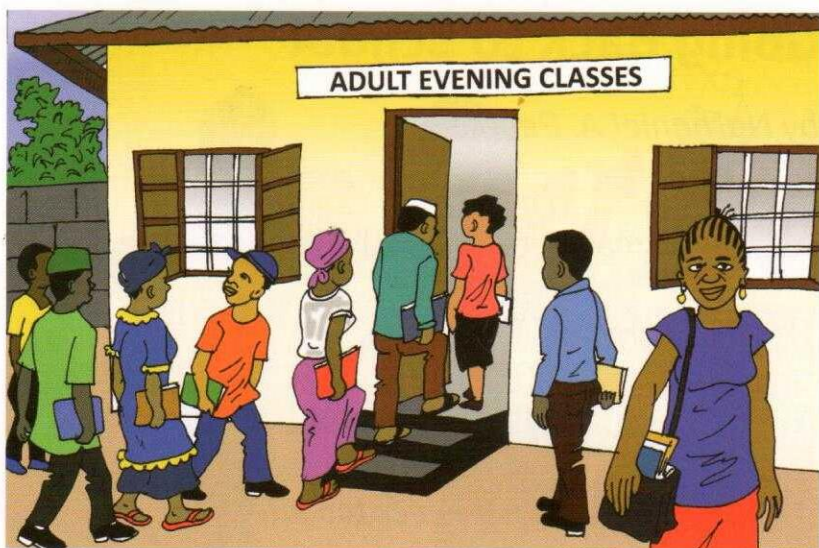
The morning bell may sound strange now.

The uniforms are not as bright.

Lunchtime break is still observed.

*It's never too late, it's never too late.*





*It's never too late to go back to school.*

*But perhaps the roles have changed now.*

*My mother doesn't send me off to school.*

*A mother myself, I hurry to arrive.*

*My goal is at my fingertips,*

*I reach and grab.*

*I must succeed.*

*It's never too late, it's never too late.*

*It's never too late to go back to back school.*

*The doors of education are always open.*

**Let's Talk!:**

## **Family Planning and Safe Sex**

*by Jedidah Johnson*

Family planning is important. What is it? Family planning helps people make plans for having a family or not. It helps them plan for having children when they want them. It helps them have the number of children they want. If they don't wish to have children, it can help them plan for that too.





Often people use contraceptives to help them make these choices. This includes individuals and couples. Contraception helps both married and unmarried people, including teenagers, to make choices about having children.

## **Talk About Sex**

Don't stay silent. Keeping silent can lead to making big mistakes. Some time ago, parents did not talk to their children about sex. Young people talked about it with other young people. These peers could often not tell them all they needed to know.

Now, more than ever, young people need to talk about sex.

Talk to responsible adults about choices. Get advice from them. Walk up to a health facility such as a family planning clinic, a government hospital, or a pharmacy. Talk to the health workers there about contraceptives. They are trained to be friendly to young people. There is no shame in asking them questions so you can protect your own health.



Consider talking with your parents! You could be saving your life and your future. Do what is best for you.



## Safe Sex

We are now in modern times and things have changed. The attitude of young people towards sex has changed. Now young people are having sex outside marriage more frequently. When people have unprotected sex, they can get or pass on sexually-transmitted diseases, such as HIV and hepatitis. Although there are medications to enable people to live with HIV, it has no cure. Hepatitis can destroy the liver. Other sexually transmitted diseases that can damage our bodies are gonorrhoea, syphilis and herpes.

If a young woman has unprotected sexual intercourse, she can also become pregnant before she is ready for a child. Many teenage mothers are unable to finish school.

If you are a young person it might be best to abstain from sex. Consider enjoying your youth free from the dangers sex can bring.

## **Sexually Transmitted Diseases**

**1.**

**HIV**

**2.**

**HEPATITIS**

**3.**

**GONORRHEA**

**4.**

**SYPHILIS**

**5.**

**HERPES**



## TYPES OF CONTRACEPTIVES

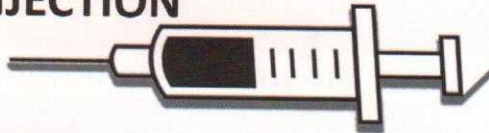
1.

PILLS



2.

INJECTION



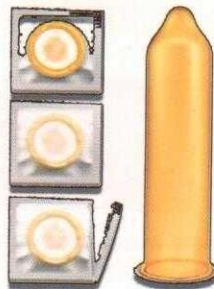
3.

IMPLANT



4.

CONDOM



If you do choose to have sex, make sure you prevent pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections. Be wise, make the right choices and learn to stay safe. Consider using contraceptives. Some common contraceptives are pills, injections, implants and condoms. Every method has its advantages and disadvantages. Some types of contraception such as pills, injections, implants and intrauterine devices, only prevent pregnancy. Others, such as condoms, can prevent both pregnancy and the spread of diseases. Learn about each contraceptive method. Then choose which method is best for you.



Commissioned by BRAC

ISBN 978 -99910 -44 - 06- 4

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*Dreaming Again*

*A Turnaround*

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***Broken Promise***

*Change of Plan*

*Is It My Dream?*

*You Think You Know*

*For Her Sake*

*The Dreamer*

*The Dancing Queen*

**Produced For the BRAC ELA Program  
Funded by the NOVO Foundation  
Contact - WWW - bracinternational  
- nl / Sierra Leone**





# Broken Promise

The three texts in this collection address several topics, including education, family planning, and safe sex. In the title story, *Broken Promise*, a fifteen-year-old girl agrees to marry a man twice her age on the condition that he allows her to continue her schooling and take her WASSCE three years later. Will he keep his promise? The narrator in the poem, *Going Back to School*, energetically describes returning to school as a mom. *Let's Talk: Family Planning and Safe Sex* offers some straight forward information about contraception and sexual health.

