

Luboni, the stepchild



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Writing for Kids

Dedication by the Honourable Minister of Education

It is a great pleasure for me to dedicate the second set of titles in the **Writing for Kids**-series to all Namibian learners. These are supplementary reading books for Namibia's primary school learners. Learning to read and write in primary school is a key objective of the Ministry of Education. In order to become readers, children need interesting and informative books to read. These books will be an important addition to every classroom. The stories explore vital issues which will help the readers to develop essential life skills. Some of these skills are needed to mitigate the impact of the HIV and AIDS pandemic on our children's lives.

The **Writing for Kids** books were written by Namibian teachers and illustrated by Namibian artists. We can all take pride in the fact that **Writing for Kids** is a Namibian project. It has resulted in a truly Namibian product to be used in our classrooms. The project is a joint venture of the Ministry's National Institute for Educational Development (NIED) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Basic Education Support Project, Phase III (BES 3).

Reading is for both children and adults. Parents, help your children to read. Children, help your parents to read.



Nangolo Mbumba, MP
Minister of Education

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In the village called Talima (Look) there lived a man called Lifasi (World) with his daughter named Luboni (We Had Seen). Luboni, a thirteen-year old girl, was in grade 6 at Namwandi Primary School.



One day, Lifasi said, “Dear daughter, I wish your mother was still alive. She would take better care of you.”

“Father,” said Luboni, “never mind, I have you.”

“Thank you, Luboni. I am lucky I have work as a school guard. With the money from this work, my child, I am able to buy you food, clothes, and pay your school fees.”

“Thank you, Father. God is with us.”



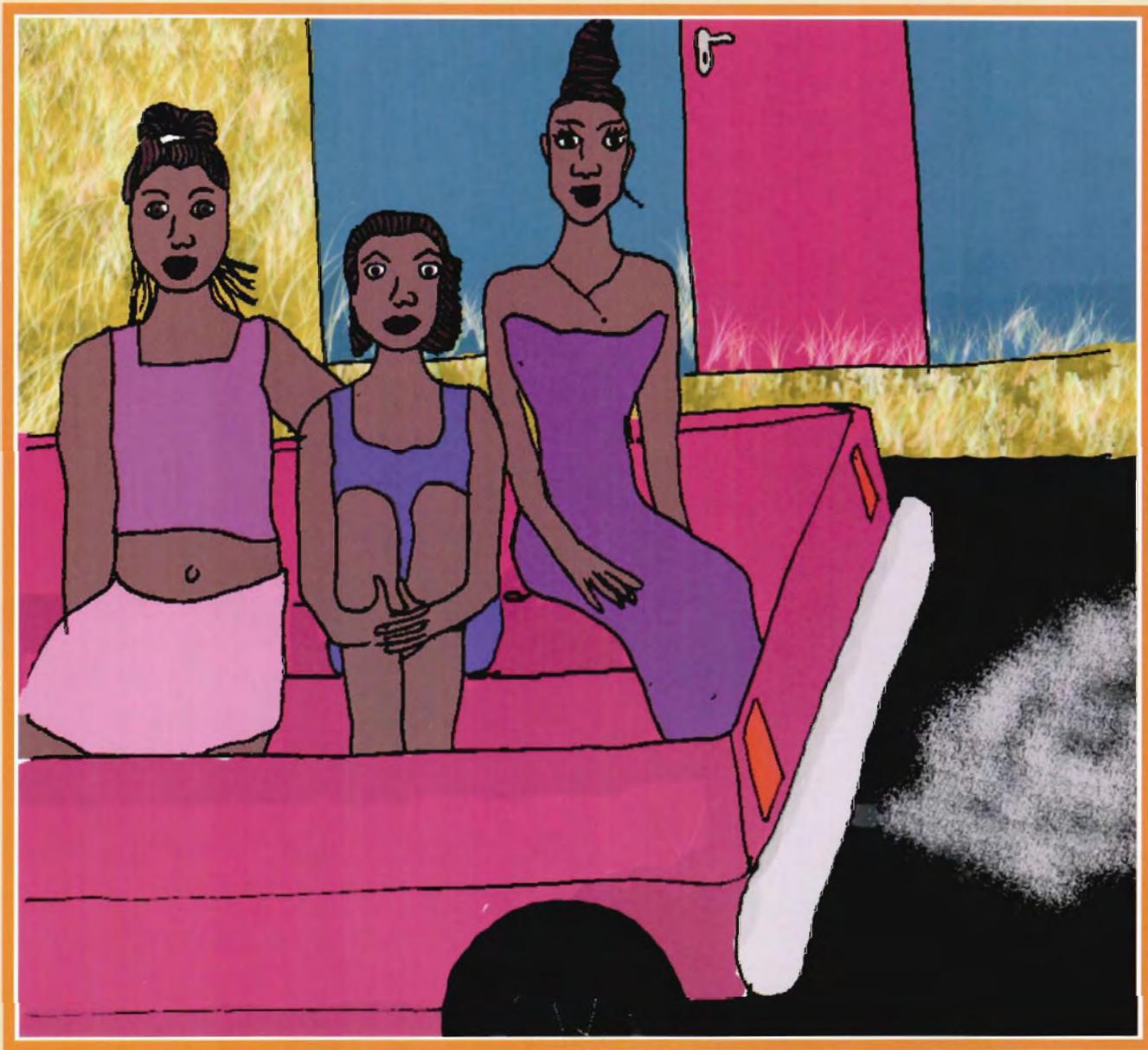
One day, Namataa (Old Woman) came to Lifasi's house and said, "Lifasi, my son, it is a long time since your wife died. You should look for someone to marry. Your daughter is growing up. She needs someone to help her around the house so that she can concentrate on her schoolwork."



A few days later, Lifasi met a woman named Lilato (Love), from a nearby village. She was very pretty and he fell in love with her.



Three months later, Lifasi asked Lilato to marry him. Namataa and the other women from the village spent weeks preparing for the traditional wedding. Finally, on the day of the wedding, there was a big feast. Two cows were slaughtered. Porridge, soft drinks and homemade beer were provided for the older people. Bread, biscuits, sweets and milk were provided for the children.



After the wedding, Lilato and her two daughters, seventeen-year old Noma and fifteen-year old Lizo moved into Lifasi's house in the village. Lifasi believed with all his heart that Lilato would take good care of her new family. He said to Lilato, "You will be a good wife."



As it turned out, Lilato's children were very lazy. They spent most of their time sleeping. Whenever they had a chance, they complained to their mother about Luboni.

"Mum, Luboni is a useless girl. She never sweeps the house, she refuses to wash the dishes or cook for us. We don't want to do anything. We are tired. Why should we work hard when we have Luboni to do the work for us?"



Lilato did not defend Luboni. Instead, she beat her and said, “Before you go to school you must first sweep the house, clean the kitchen, and make tea for my children.” Lilato continued, “This meal is for your father. My daughters and I will eat potatoes and beans. You, Luboni, will eat the mahangu porridge which your sisters left last supper.”

In tears, Luboni obeyed her stepmother. She was afraid to tell her father about her daily problems. She did not want to make him unhappy.



One day, Namataa called Lifasi to her house and said, “Lifasi, my son, would you come here and help me lift this bundle of firewood?”

When Lifasi came near she said, “Lifasi, I am feeling pity for your daughter. While you are at work, she is treated like a slave by your new wife and her daughters. Tomorrow you should hide in my house and see what is happening.”

“Thank you for telling me this,” replied Lifasi. “Tomorrow I will hide and see if what you say is true.”



The following morning Lifasi pretended to go to work. He hid in the old woman's hut.

When Lilato and her children woke up, he heard them shouting at Luboni, "Wake up, you lazy girl! Where is our tea?"



Luboni answered weakly, “I cannot get up today. I am not well.”

Lilato screamed, “You wicked child, do you think I am the one who killed your mother? You need to work for us. If you are not going to do anything, I am not going to give you any food. Maybe your loving father or your dead mother will give you something to eat.”



When Luboni heard her stepmother's words, she got up and started working and crying at the same time. Noma and Lizo laughed at her as she cried. All the while, Lifasi's heart was breaking as he heard and watched what was happening.



That evening, Lifasi pretended to be returning from work. He entered his house, still suffering from the insulting words his wife had used with Luboni. Lifasi didn't want to show Lilato that he was angry. He wanted to give her another chance. He told her not to discriminate against the children.

"Each of the girls must be treated equally," he said.

"Of course, my dear husband," Lilato said.



A week later, Lilato found that only a part of the house had been swept. She called for Luboni.

“Why didn’t you finish sweeping?” she asked her.

“Mother, my hand is swollen,” replied Luboni.

“Luboni, today I am going to teach you how to behave.” She swung the broom down hard on Luboni’s arm and broke it.



When Lifasi came back from work he found his daughter crying loudly, “My arm is broken, my arm is broken! Help me, I can’t lift my arm.”

“How did you break your arm?” he asked.

“My stepmother beat me with a broom.”



Lifasi led his daughter to the edge of the village where a passing car took them to the hospital. Her arm was reset and covered with a plaster cast so that it could heal. The doctor told Lifasi to let Luboni remain at the hospital for a few days of rest.

“She must forget Lilato,” he said.



Meanwhile, Lifasi returned home and asked his wife to tell him what had happened. Lilato said, “Your daughter is very lazy. She failed to sweep all of the house.”

Lifasi’s anger was swift and powerful as a summer storm. “Is that the reason why you beat her?” he shouted. He was very disappointed in his wife.



He ordered her to pack her and her daughters' belongings and to return to her mother's house to live. He shouted at her, "Now I understand why your daughters were living with their grandmother when I met you. You are a wicked woman. You do not know how to be a good mother. You may think that you are the most beautiful and most important lady in this world, but you do not care for others. Why did you trouble my daughter so? Since I have been married to you, she has not eaten nor slept well. She has been too afraid to say anything to me. You have not treated our daughters equally."



Lilato gathered her things. “You are a bad man. I will leave you alone and you will marry your ghost,” she shouted.

Lifasi replied, “Go away. I know about everything that you have done to my daughter. You think you have been so clever, but I know what you are really like. Your real name should be Lunya (Hate)!”



Lilato and her two daughters gathered their belongings and returned to her mother's home.

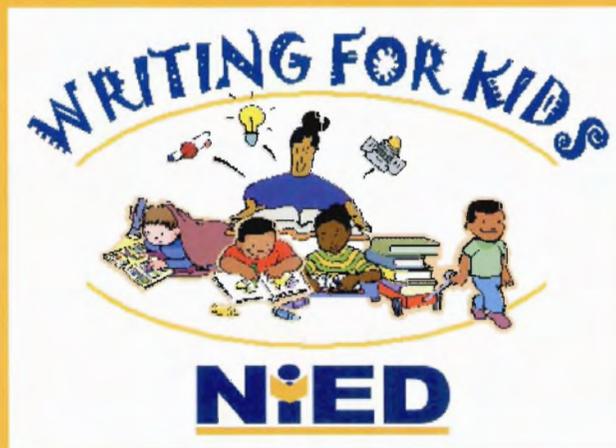
Luboni, rested and healed, returned home to her father.



Lifasi apologized to her. "I am sorry my child. I didn't mean to hurt you. I didn't think that Lilato would do the things she did to you. You should have spoken out against her. I would have asked her to leave sooner."

Luboni replied, "It is all right, Father. If something bad happens to me again, I will tell you immediately. I was too afraid that you wouldn't believe me."

"I was blind," Lifasi said. "It was only when I saw with my own eyes how you were being treated that I knew I must do something. And even then I waited too long and your arm was broken. I will never let that happen again. I too have learned a lesson."



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