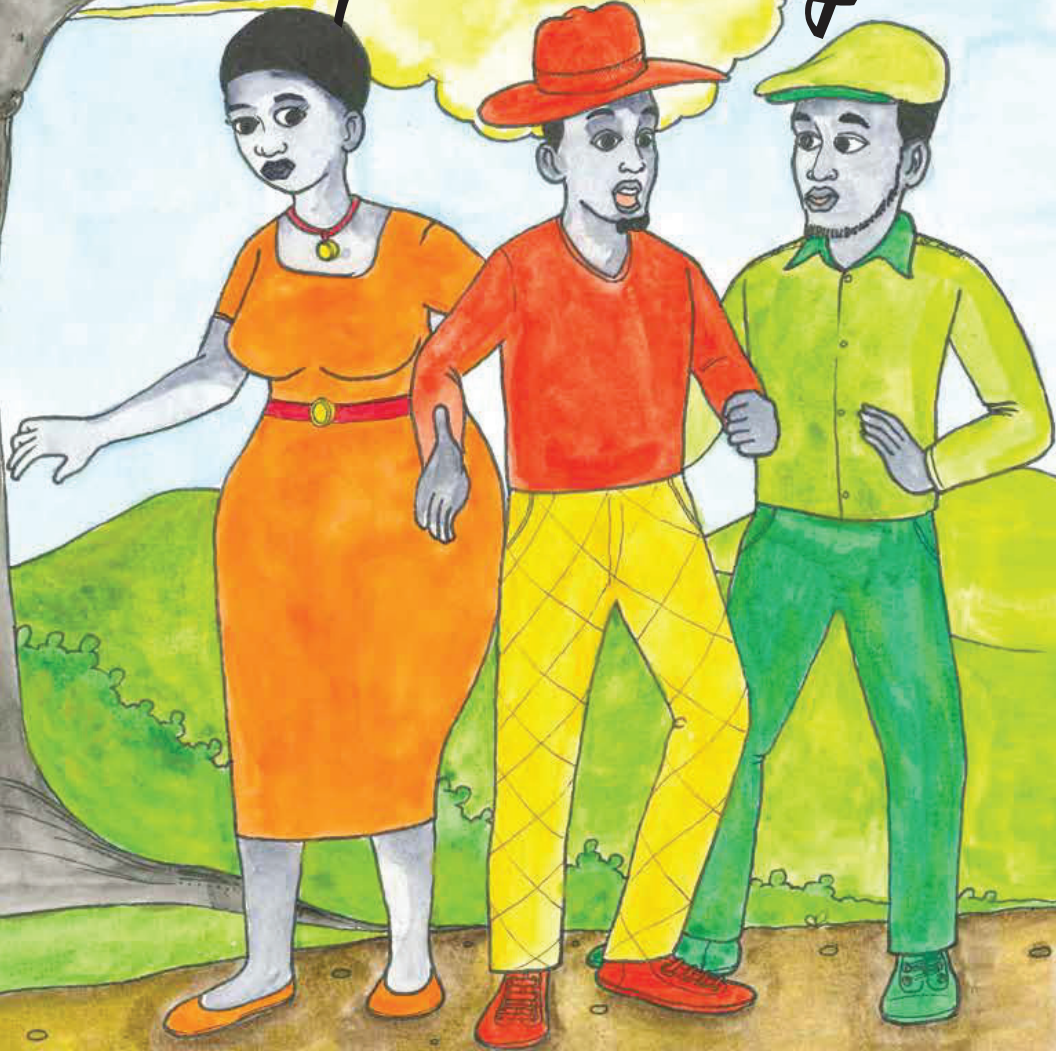


# *Marpeh's Story*



A Story of love that stood the test of time

Written and illustrated by:

Dr. Thomas MUYOMBO



# Marpah's Story



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## **H.E. Mrs. CLAR MARIE WEAH, First Lady of Liberia Message**

As the First Lady of Liberia and ambassador of “Merck more than a Mother” campaign, I am very happy to share with you this inspiring story of Marpeh and Kumba.

As you all know, in many cultures, childless women still suffer discrimination, stigma and ostracism. It is sad to know that women are blamed for infertility, although 50% of infertility are due to men. We need to encourage men to speak up and discuss their infertility issues openly and know that fertility is a shared responsibility.

One in every four couples in developing countries suffer infertility. This prevalence rate is high indeed. Majority of infertility cases can be due to untreated infectious disease, such as Sexually Transmitted Diseases, Genital mutilation, unsafe abortion, and unsafe delivery, hence prevention is very important and this is one of the main objectives of the campaign.

Therefore I am very happy to work closely with Merck Foundation to empower women and raise awareness among our communities, with special focus on the youth (girls and boys) through this story, to know how to prevent infertility, how to protect themselves and also how to value themselves whether they are mothers or not. Women are more than just mothers, they are productive members in society and should be respected.

This story is part of the ‘Merck More Than a Mother’ campaign which is very close to my heart. I hope you will understand the message behind it. I believe we must prepare our children for tomorrow with the right family values of love and respect.

Having a child, takes both a man and a woman, every woman is more than a mother, every man is more than a father.

**H.E. Mrs. CLAR MARIE WEAH,  
The First Lady of the Republic of Liberia**



## **Dr. RASHA KELEJ Message**

As an African woman and the CEO of Merck Foundation, I am very proud to introduce this inspiring story of Marpeh and Kumba.

In many cultures, childless women still suffer discrimination, stigma and ostracism. An inability to have a child or to become pregnant can result in being greatly isolated, disinherited or assaulted. This often results in divorce or physical and psychological violence. Therefore we have created “Merck More Than a Mother” campaign with the aim to define many interventions to empower infertile women through access to information, health and change of mind-set.

This story is one of these interventions to break the stigma around infertile women and raises awareness about infertility prevention and male infertility.

It’s important for parents and caregivers to start teaching respect and nurturing empathy from a very young age. We should teach boys these qualities at their schools and through media. I believe both boys and girls need the same kind of guidance.

Just like girls, young boys gradually learn how to control their behavior during their pre-school and elementary school years. This story is our way to empower our boys to develop true respect for women and know few facts about Infertility prevention and how it affects both men and women equally.

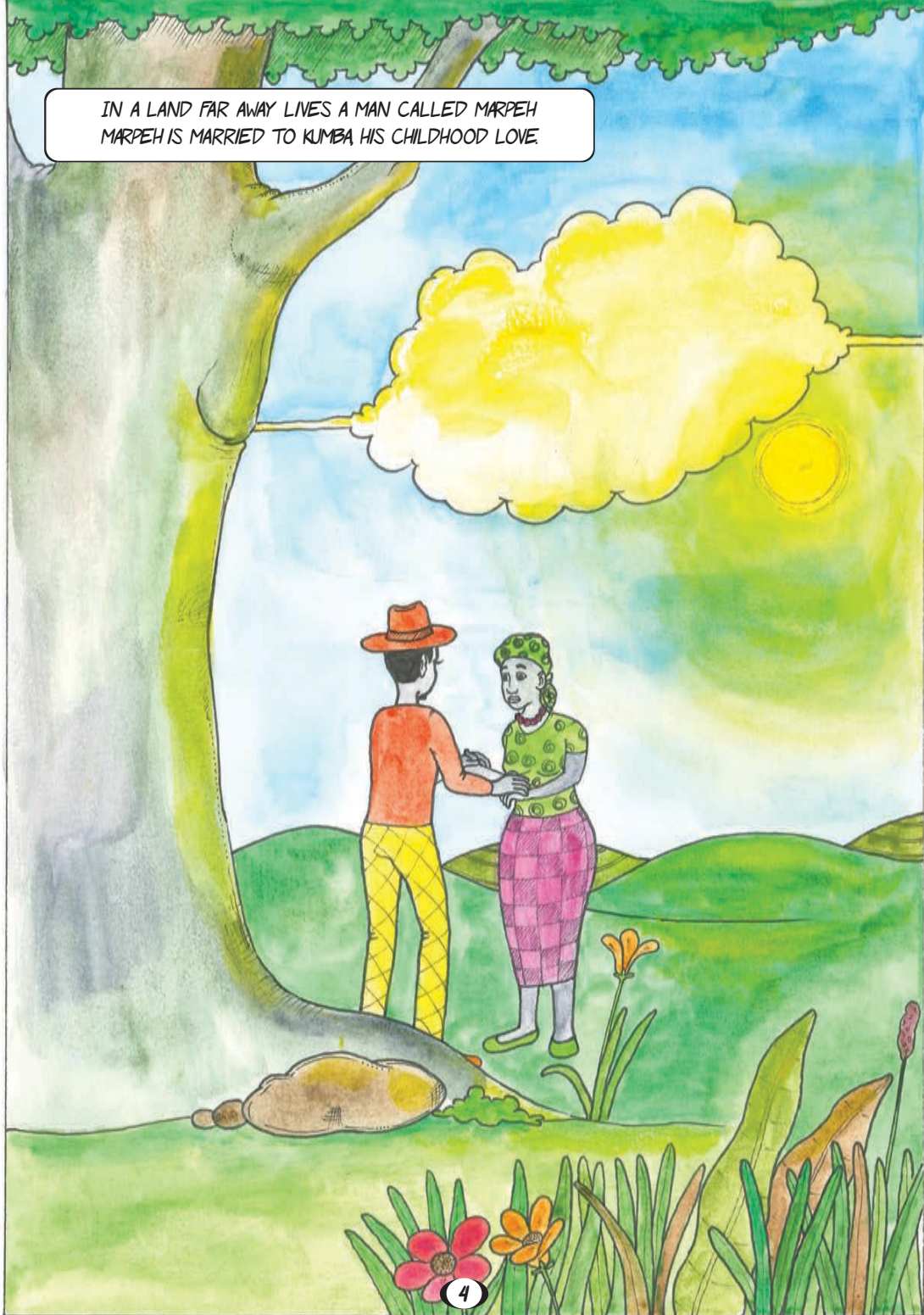
Reading Marpeh’s story will teach our children to respect and value all people Regardless of being parents or not. It will also help preparing our children for tomorrow with the right family values of love and respect. Everyone deserves respect and love, and should never ever be overlooked or, worse, abused — even if they are childless.

I hope you will understand the story’s message “Having a child, takes both a man and a woman, every woman is more than a Mother, Every man is more than a Father “.

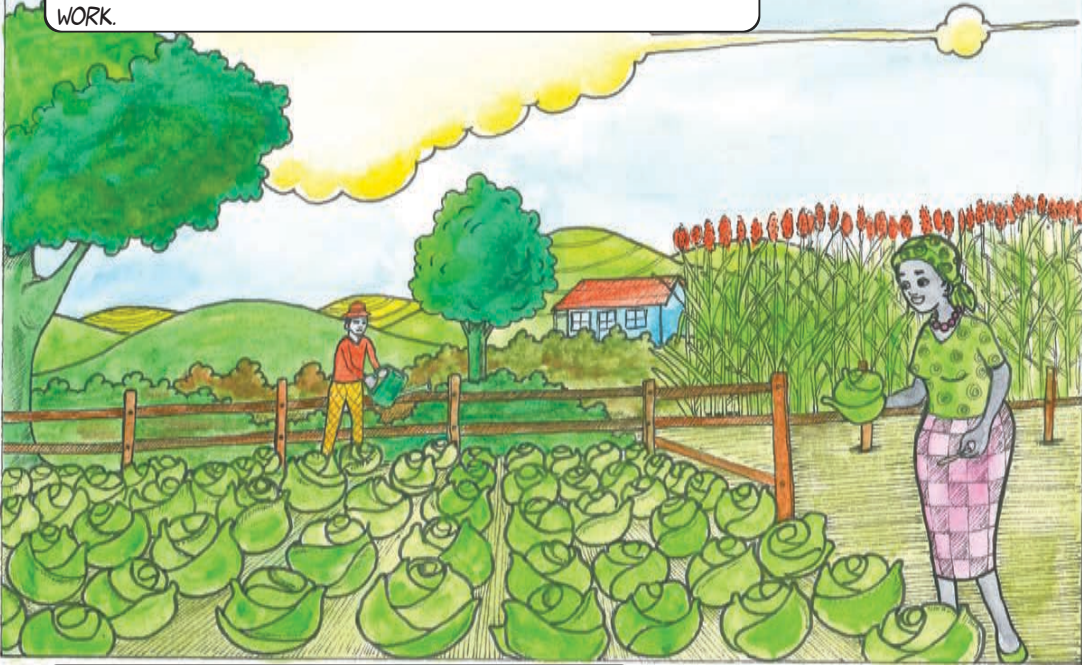
Enjoy reading Marpeh’s story.....

**Dr. Rasha Kelej**  
**CEO of Merck Foundation**  
**President of Merck more than a Mother**

IN A LAND FAR AWAY LIVES A MAN CALLED MARPEH  
MARPEH IS MARRIED TO KUMBA HIS CHILDHOOD LOVE



MARPEH AND KUMBA ARE WEALTHY DUE TO THEIR HARD WORK.  
TWO YEARS AGO, MARPEH AND KUMBA WENT OUT IN THEIR FARM TO WORK.



THEY WERE SAYING LOVELY WORDS TO ONE ANOTHER.



MY LOVE  
KUMBA I LOVE YOU  
LIKE I NEVER  
LOVED BEFORE.



A LADY CALLED JATU AND HER SON TARPEH PASSED BY MARPEH AND KUMBA FARM.

TARPEH, LET US SAY A GOOD HELLO TO MARPEH AND KUMBA I THINK YOU KNOW THEM, DON'T YOU?

YES I DO, MOTHER

I WONDER HOW THEY CAN BE HAPPY LIKE THAT WHEN THEY CAN'T HAVE CHILDREN. THE WOMAN IS INFERTILE

I NEED TO LET THEM KNOW HOW MISERABLE THEY SHOULD FEEL.

HELLO LOVEBIRDS!

HELLO JATU.

AND THEN...

HOW CAN SOMEONE BARREN LIKE YOU KUMBA PRETEND TO BE HAPPY? YOU SHOULD BE MOURNING AND HIDING YOUR FACE.

ARE YOU SERIOUS?

NO!



JATU WENT ON...

YOU SHOULD GIVE YOUR HUSBAND A CHILD OR ELSE RETURN TO YOUR PARENTS. MARPEH DOESN'T DESERVE THIS, HE IS A KIND MAN.



AND KUMBA STARTED CRYING

JATU, HOW CAN YOU BE SO CRUEL LIKE THAT? WHAT DID WE DO TO YOU?



MARPEH WAS SHOCKED

KUMBA MY LOVE, PLEASE DON'T CRY. YOU KNOW HOW I LOVE YOU, DON'T MIND ANYTHING SHE SAYS.



AND, MARPEH WENT AWAY

SHE JUST SAID THAT I AM BARREN! YOU KNOW I ALSO LOVE CHILDREN LIKE EVERY WOMAN.

DON'T THINK ABOUT WHAT SHE SAID I LOVE YOU WITH ALL MY HEART AND I DON'T MIND NOT HAVING CHILDREN

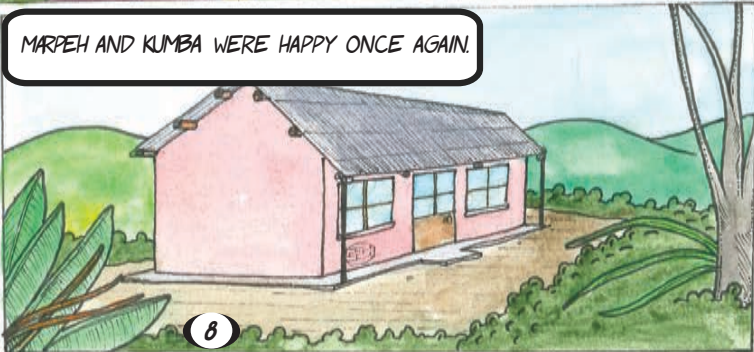


MARPEH AND KUMBA WENT BACK HOME

KUMBA PEOPLE LOVE TO TALK BUT THEIR TALK WILL NOT STOP OUR LOVE



MARPEH AND KUMBA WERE HAPPY ONCE AGAIN.



ONE WEEK AFTER, KUMBA WENT TO THEIR FARM TO HARVEST ORANGES

I SHOULD HURRY, MY HUSBAND HAS A BUSINESS MEETING TO ATTEND



KUMBA WENT HOME FAST


MARPEH WAS STANDING IN FRONT OF THEIR HOUSE WAITING FOR KUMBA TO COME. HE DIDN'T WANT TO GO AND LEAVE NO ONE AT HOME



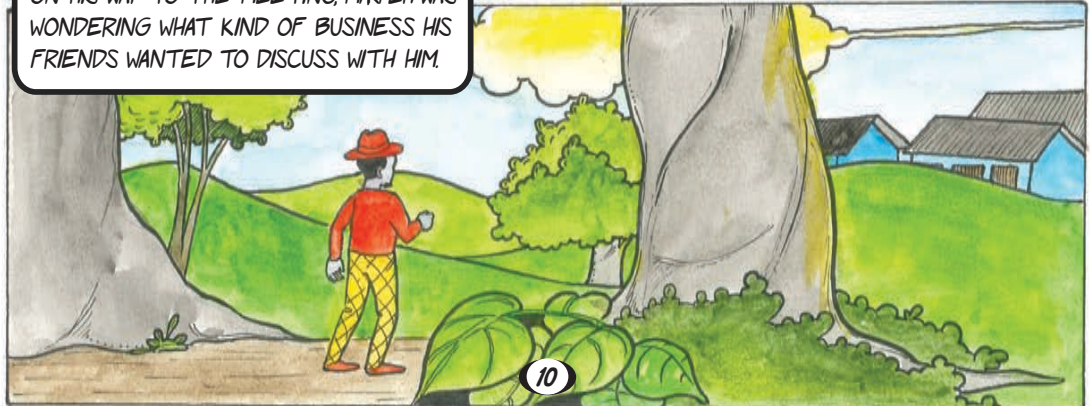


KUMBA GOT THERE ON TIME

HERE SHE COMES SHE IS NEVER LATE



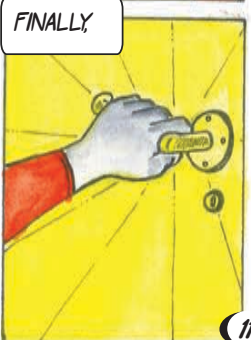
KUMBA SWEETHEART, LET ME RUN TO THE BUSINESS MEETING I DON'T WANT TO BE LATE



ON HIS WAY TO THE MEETING, MARPEH WAS WONDERING WHAT KIND OF BUSINESS HIS FRIENDS WANTED TO DISCUSS WITH HIM.

HE WONDERED IF HIS FRIENDS WANTED TO BUY ALL THE YIELD HE GETS FROM HIS FARM,

OR IF THEY WANTED TO OFFER HIM SOME MONEY TO INVEST IN HIS FARMING BUSINESS.



FINALLY,

MARPEH ENTERED THE MEETING PLACE



I SEE THEM IN THE CORNER



HELLO MARPEH

HELLO



LONG TIME MY FRIENDS! WHAT BUSINESS DO YOU HAVE FOR ME?

AND THEN,

YOU SEE MARPEH, BINDA AND I HAVE BEEN THINKING ABOUT YOU. WE KNOW YOU ARE SAD BECAUSE YOUR WIFE IS INFERTILE LET'S HELP YOU AND FIND YOU A FERTILE YOUNG WIFE,

WHAT?

MORLU IS RIGHT. WE THINK YOU SHOULD LEAVE THAT MISERABLE WOMAN YOU HAVE AS A WIFE.

OKAY!!! NOW I SEE THE KIND OF BUSINESS YOU CALLED ME FOR!

LET ME TELL YOU SOMETHING, I CAN NEVER LEAVE MY WIFE. INFERTILE OR NOT, I LOVE HER.

NOT ALL WOMEN ARE BARREN, LEAVE HER.

LET'S LEAVE THIS DISCUSSION HERE.

THE NEXT MORNING, MARPEH DECIDED TO TAKE HIS WIFE KUMBA TO THE HOSPITAL TO SEEK SOME MEDICAL HELP.

KUMBA MY LOVE,  
I PROMISE TO  
DO EVERYTHING  
FOR YOU TO BE  
TREATED.

THANK YOU  
MARPEH MY  
EVERYTHING.



AT THE HOSPITAL

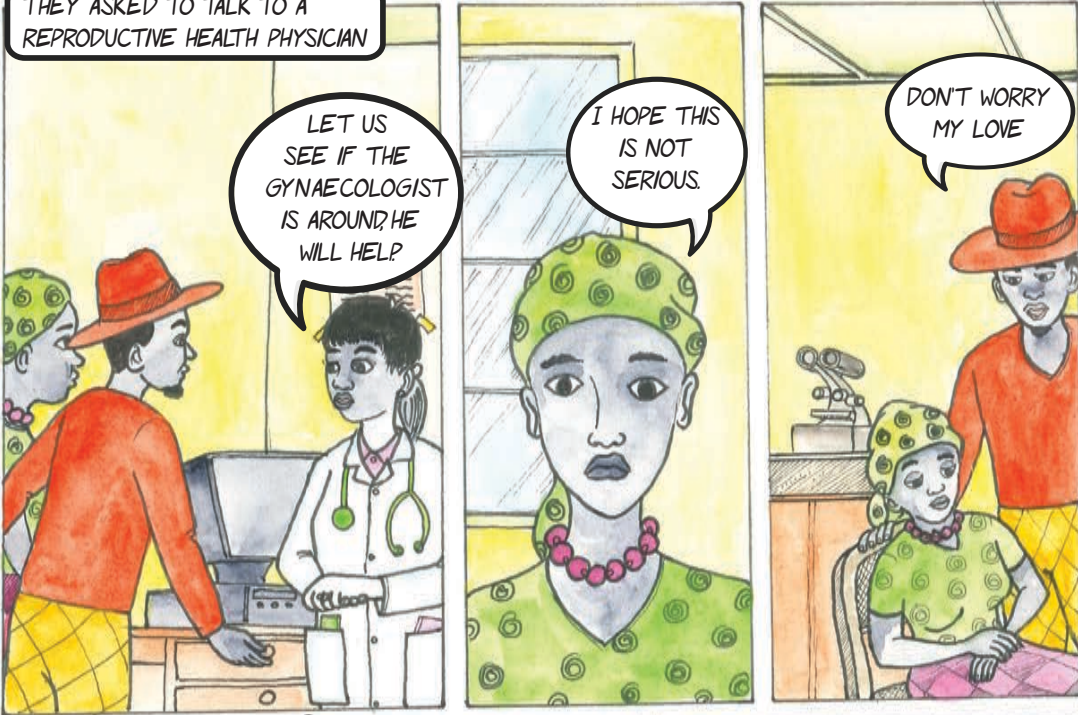


THEY ASKED TO TALK TO A REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH PHYSICIAN

LET US SEE IF THE GYNAECOLOGIST IS AROUND, HE WILL HELP

I HOPE THIS IS NOT SERIOUS.

DON'T WORRY MY LOVE



I WILL CARE FOR HER NO MATTER WHAT.

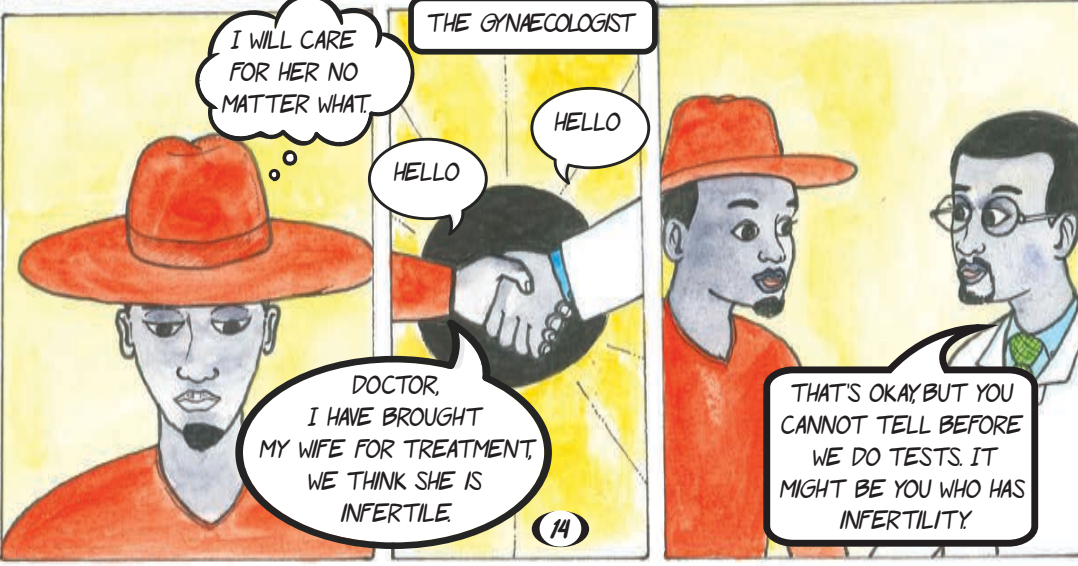
THE GYNAECOLOGIST

HELLO

HELLO


DOCTOR, I HAVE BROUGHT MY WIFE FOR TREATMENT, WE THINK SHE IS INFERTILE.

THAT'S OKAY, BUT YOU CANNOT TELL BEFORE WE DO TESTS. IT MIGHT BE YOU WHO HAS INFERTILITY.






WHAT? ME?  
NO WAY.  
A MAN IS NEVER  
INFERTILE.



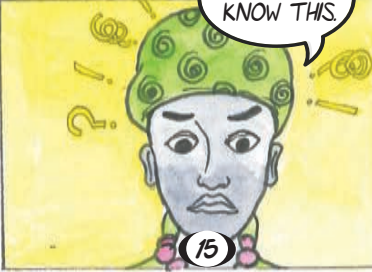
I HAVE NEVER  
SEEN ONE  
INFERTILE  
MAN IN MY  
LIFE.



MEN TOO CAN BE  
INFERTILE... LET US  
HOPE YOU TWO ARE  
JUST FINE.



LET US  
HOPE SO.



I DID NOT  
KNOW THIS.

AFTER DOING ALL THE REQUIRED TESTS, IT WAS MARPEH WHO HAD THE PROBLEM THAT WAS CAUSING THE INFERTILITY. MARPEH HAD A LOW SPERM COUNT. THE DOCTOR TOLD THEM THAT INTRAUTERINE INSEMINATION (IUI) PROCEDURE IS REQUIRED TO BE DONE. MARPEH AND KUMBA AGREED TO THE PROCEDURE.

THE DOCTOR TOLD THEM THAT MANY CASES OF INFERTILITY ARE TREATABLE ONCE THEY ARE DIAGNOSED EARLY.

HE MENTIONED THE FOLLOWING AS THE MAJOR CAUSES OF INFERTILITY;

- POOR NUTRITION
- UNTREATED SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES SUCH AS CHLAMYDIA AND GONORRHOEA,
- CONSEQUENCE OF INFECTIONS CAUSED BY PRACTICE OF FEMALE GENITAL MUTILTION, UNSAFE ABORTION OR UNSAFE DELIVERY.
- THE USE OF HERBAL DOUCHES AND ENEMAS WHICH LED TO PELVIC INFECTIONS AND TUBAL BLOCKAGE.
- EXPOSURE TO SMOKING, LEADED PETROL AND OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTANTS.

HE TOLD THEM THAT ONCE YOU GO FOR REGULAR CHECK UP AND CONSULT EVERY TIME YOU ARE SICK, YOU CAN EASILY PREVENT YOURSELF FROM HAVING INFERTILITY.

MARPEH AND KUMBA THANKED THE DOCTOR AND WENT HOME.

MARPEH AND KUMBA AGREED TO UNDERGO THE INTRAUTERINE INSEMINATION (IUI) PROCEDURE



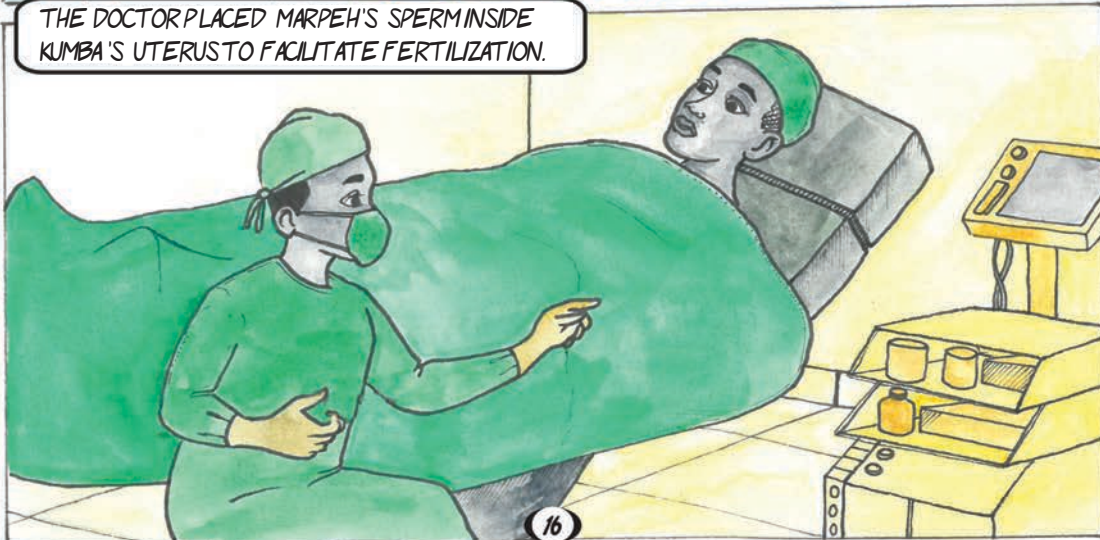
AT THE HOSPITAL, THEY MET WITH THE DOCTOR WHO WAS GOING TO PERFORM THE INTRAUTERINE PROCEDURE



MARPEH WAITED PATIENTLY.



THE DOCTOR PLACED MARPEH'S SPERM INSIDE KUMBA'S UTERUS TO FACILITATE FERTILIZATION.



KUMBA TOOK A PREGNANCY TEST AFTER FOURTEEN DAYS AND SHE WAS PREGNANT.

NINE MONTHS AFTER THE INTRAUTERINE (IUI) PROCEDURE, IT WAS TIME TO GO TO THE HOSPITAL TO GIVE BIRTH.



DO YOU HAVE A NAME FOR THIS LITTLE CUTIE IN THE WOMB?



I THINK I WILL NAME HIM MARPEH KUMBA



THEY BOTH SMILED AND WENT ON...



MARPEH AND KUMBA WERE HAPPY TO FINALLY HAVE A BABY.

I AM HAPPY, NOW I AM A FATHER.

NO MARPEH, YOU ARE MORE THAN A FATHER.



YOU WERE MORE THAN A FATHER EVEN BEFORE WE HAD THIS BABY



MARPEH SMILED

YES, KUMBA MY LOVE, YOU ARE ALSO MORE THAN A MOTHER.



ONE DAY, MARPEH MET JATU AND BINDA ON THE WAY TO THE MARKET.

MY FRIENDS, I HAVE LEARNT THAT INFERTILITY IS NOT A CURSE, IT'S A CONDITION THAT AFFECTS BOTH MEN AND WOMEN AND CAN BE TREATED ONCE SOMEONE SEEKS TREATMENT EARLY. NO ONE SHOULD BE STIGMATIZED BECAUSE THEY ARE INFERTILE.

I APOLOGIZE FOR THE BAD WORDS AND FOUL MOUTH.

NOW I HAVE LEARNT MY LESSON. WHAT YOU ARE SAYING IS RIGHT.

THE END



Spread the word to the world with us. Say no for infertility stigma

## OUR HASHTAGS

#NoToInfertilyStigma

#MoreThanAMother

#MoreThanAFather

Share your story with us on social media and use the above hashtags and let the world know that infertility affects both men and women equally. No woman or man should suffer stigmatisation due to inferility.

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# *Morpek's Story*

*How love withstands and conquers all.  
You will discover how love is  
everything.”*

*the author*

*This book is a property of*

