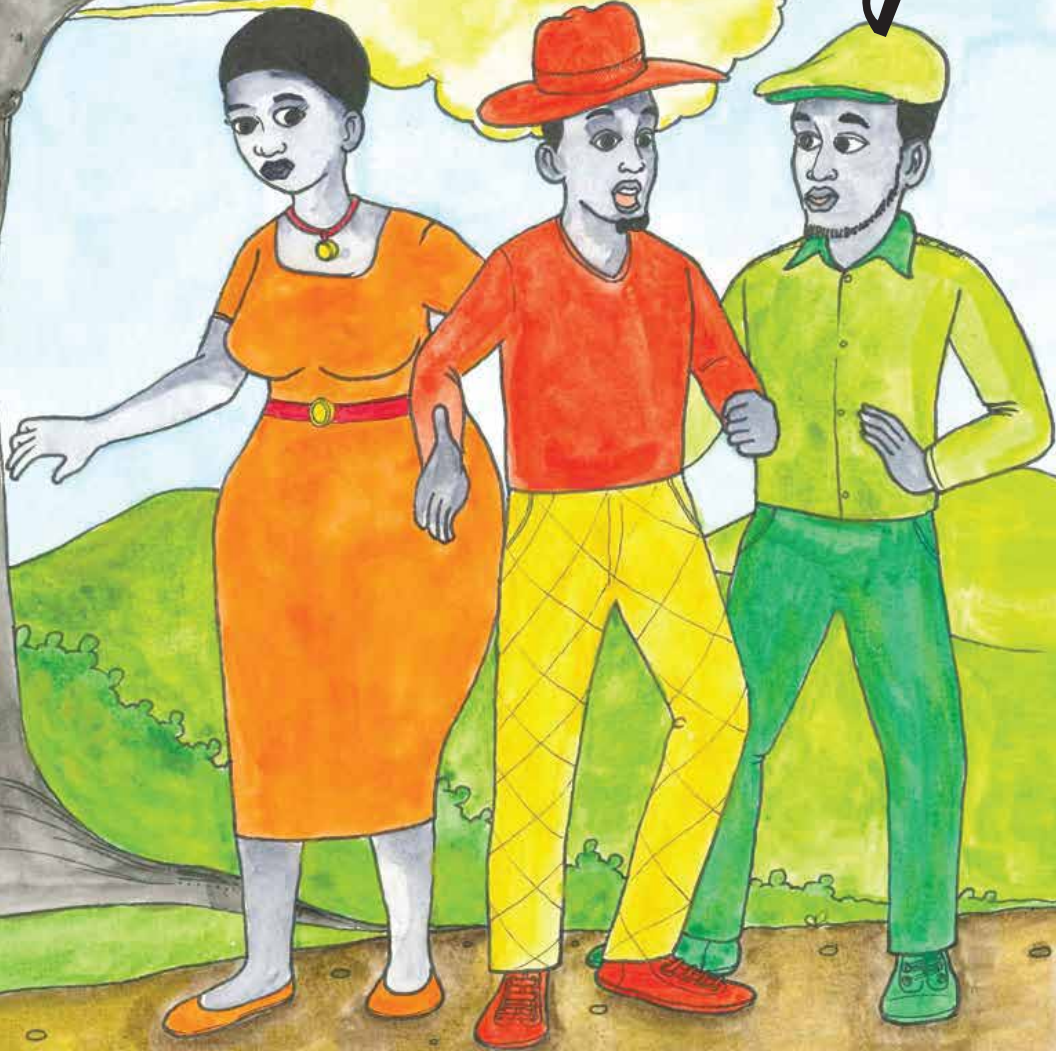


Musa's Story



A Story of love that stood the test of time

Written and illustrated by:

Dr. Thomas MUYOMBO

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H.E. Mrs. FATOUMATTA BAH-BARROW Message

As the First Lady of The Gambia and ambassador of “Merck More Than a Mother” campaign, I am very happy to share with you this inspiring story of Musa and Jainaba.

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. FATOUMATTA BAH-BARROW
The First Lady of the Republic of The Gambia
Ambassador of Merck More Than a Mother



Dr. RASHA KELEJ Message

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

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.

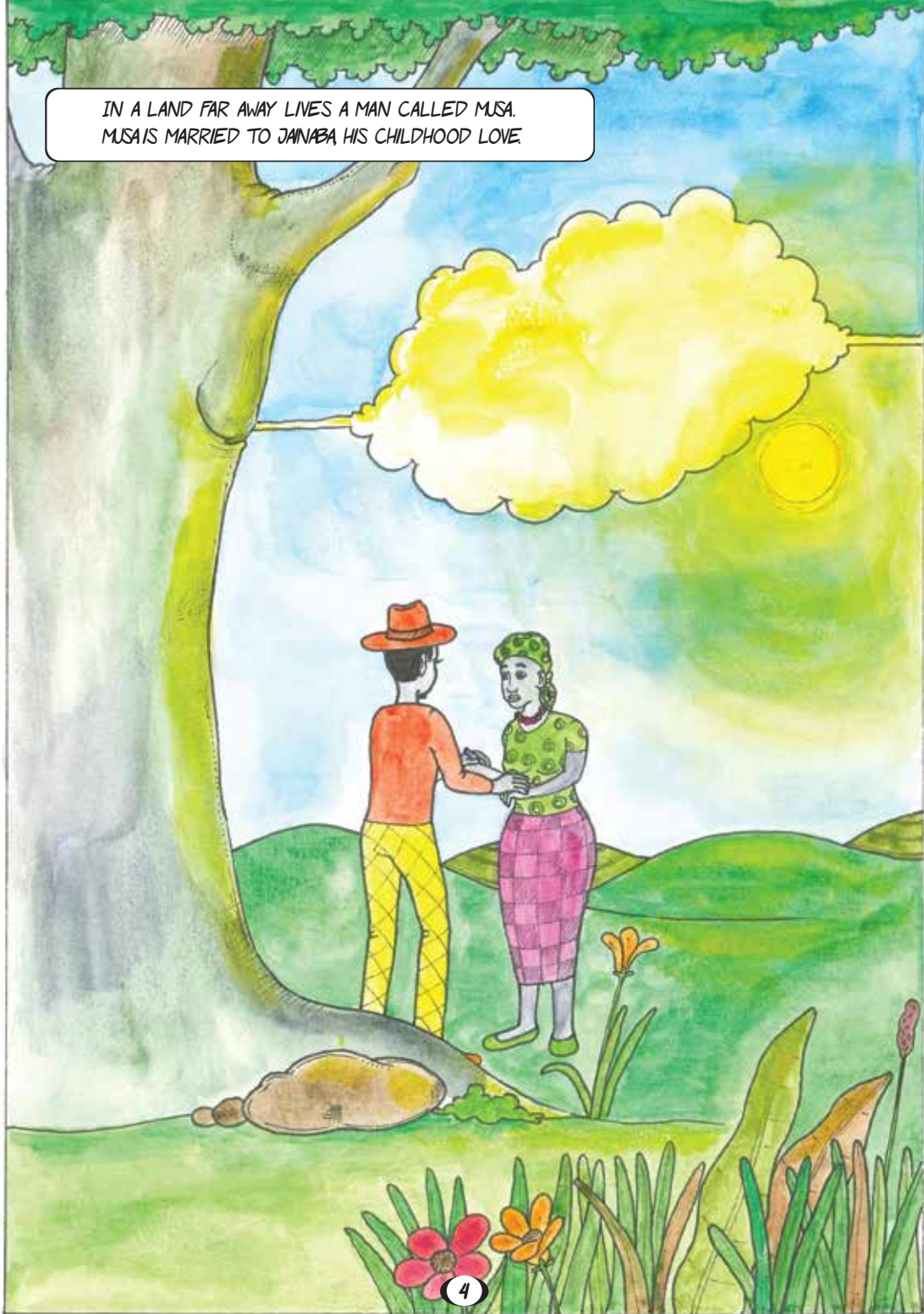
Reading Musa’s story will teach our children to respect and value all people regardless of being parents or not. It will also help preparing our children for tomorrow with the right family values of love and respect. Everyone deserves respect and love, and should never ever be overlooked or, worse, abused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

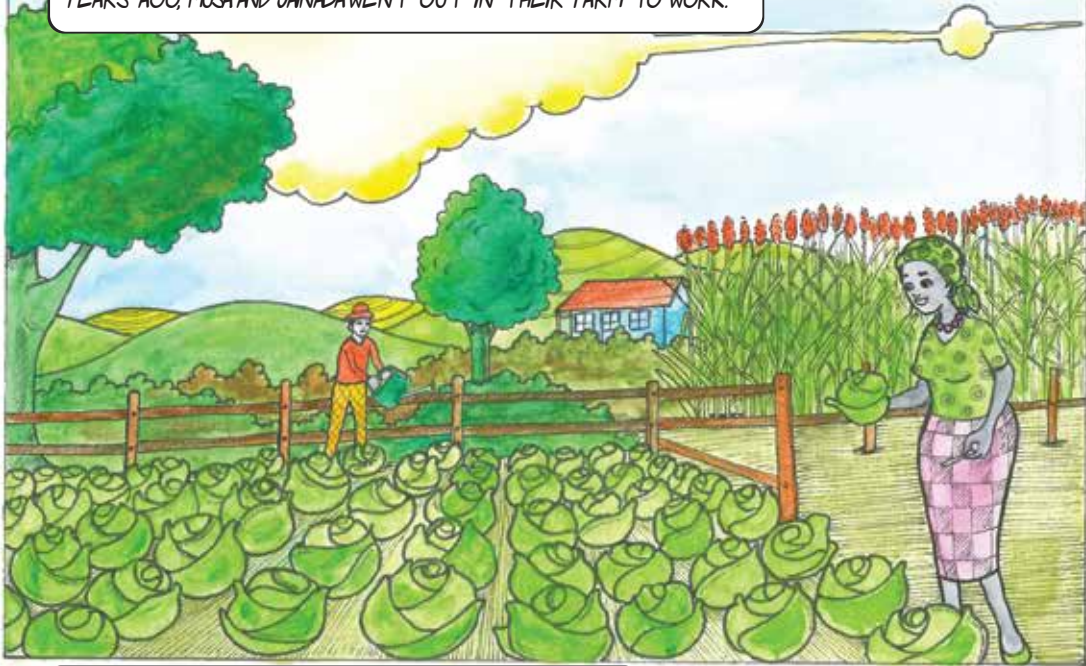
Enjoy reading Musa’s story.....

Senator, Dr. Rasha Kelej
CEO of Merck Foundation
Member of the Egyptian Senate (2020- 2025)
Most Influential African (2019, 2020)
African Woman of the Year 2020
President of 'Merck More Than a Mother'

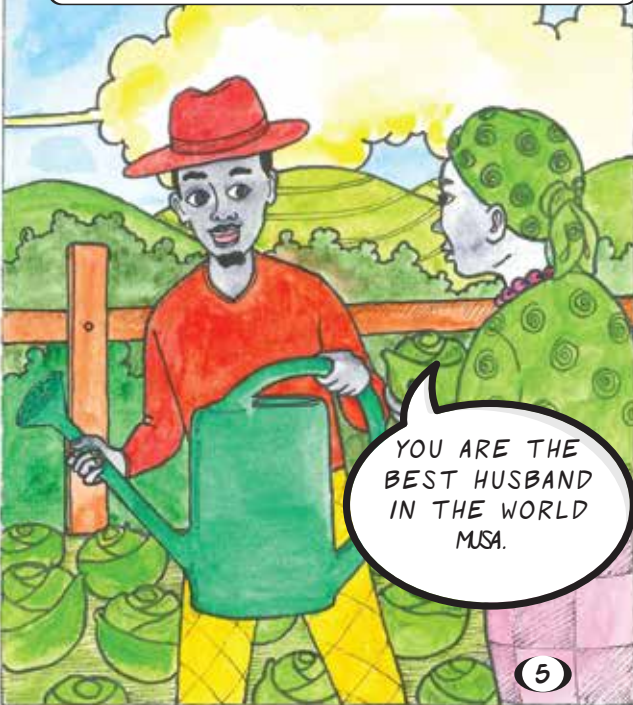
IN A LAND FAR AWAY LIVES A MAN CALLED MUSA.
MUSA IS MARRIED TO JANABA HIS CHILDHOOD LOVE



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



THEY WERE SAYING LOVELY WORDS TO ONE ANOTHER.



MY LOVE JAINABA, I LOVE YOU LIKE I NEVER LOVED BEFORE.



A LADY CALLED FATOU AND HER SON LAMIN PASSED BY MUSA AND JANABA'S FARM.

LAMIN, LET US SAY A GOOD HELLO TO MUSA AND JANABA 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 FATOU.

AND THEN...

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

ARE YOU SERIOUS?

NO!



FATOU WENT ON...

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



AND JAINABA STARTED CRYING

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



MUSA WAS SHOCKED

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



AND... FATOU 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



MUSA AND JAINABA WENT BACK HOME

JAINABA, PEOPLE LOVE TO TALK BUT THEIR TALK WILL NOT STOP OUR LOVE



MUSA AND JAINABA WERE HAPPY ONCE AGAIN.



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

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



JAINABA WENT HOME FAST


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





JAINABA GOT THERE
ON TIME

HERE
SHE COMES.
SHE IS NEVER
LATE.



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



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

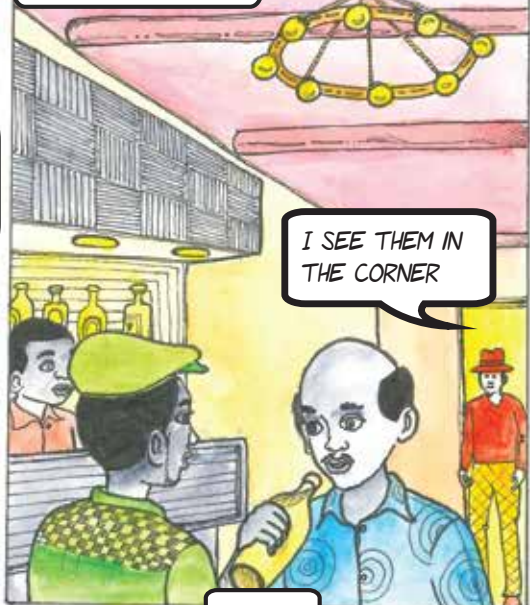
HE WONDERED IF HIS FRIENDS WANTED TO BUY ALL THE YIELD HE GETS FROM HIS FARM,

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



FINALLY,

MUSA ENTERED THE MEETING PLACE



I SEE THEM IN THE CORNER



HELLO MUSA

HELLO



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

AND THEN,

YOU SEE MUSA, EBRIMA 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?

ABUBACARR 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, MUSA DECIDED TO TAKE HIS WIFE JAINABA TO THE HOSPITAL TO SEEK SOME MEDICAL HELP.

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

THANK YOU
MUSA MY
EVERYTHING.



AT THE HOSPITAL

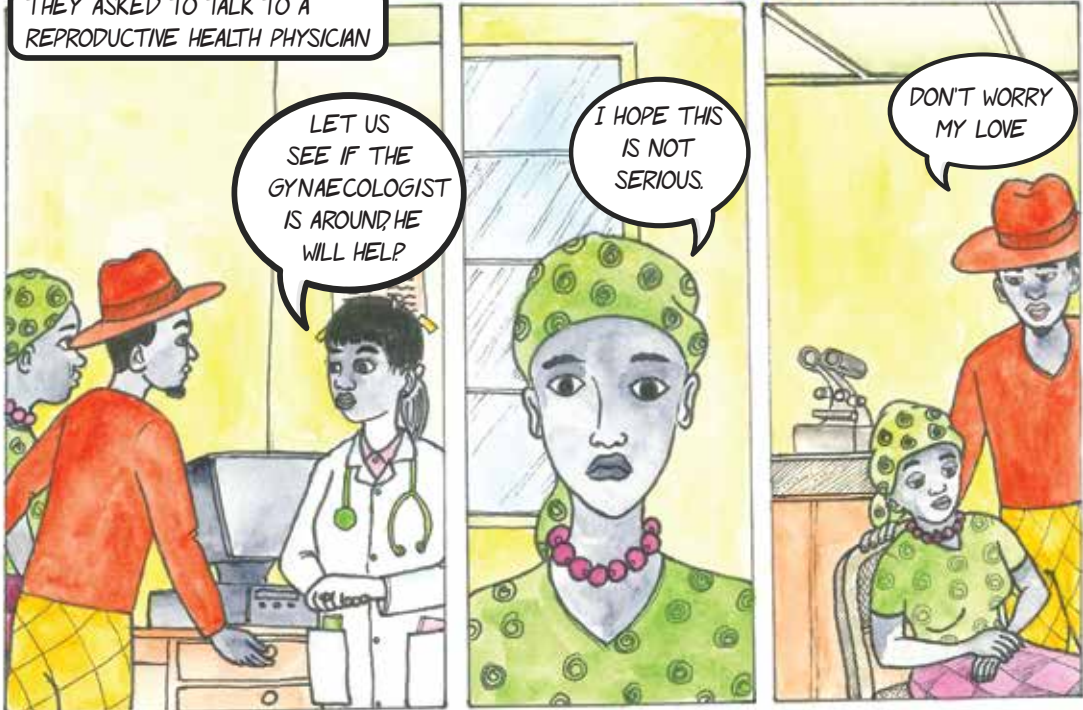


THEY ASKED TO TALK TO A REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH PHYSICIAN

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.

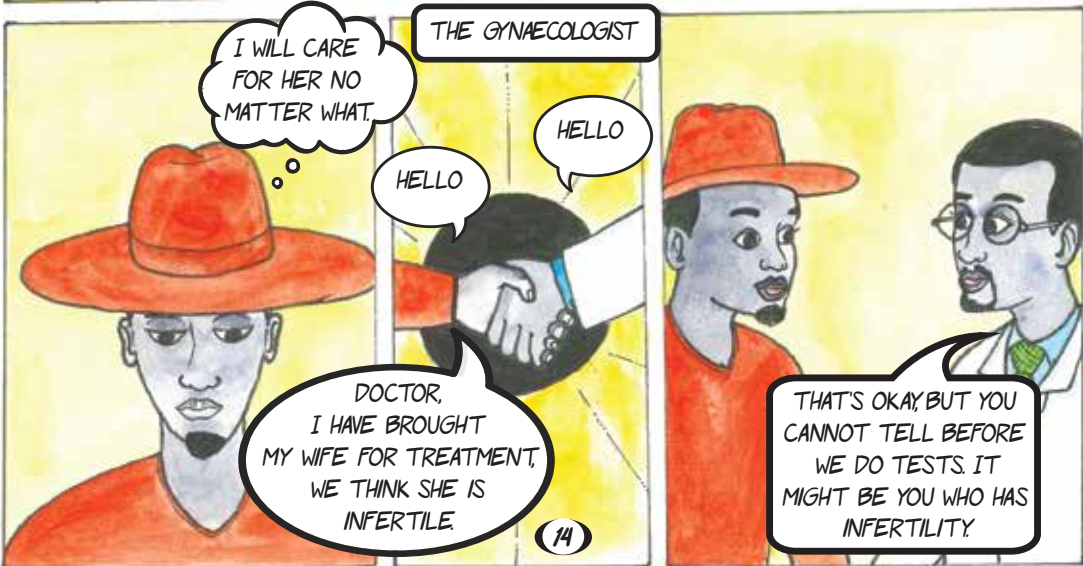
THE GYNAECOLOGIST

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.





AFTER DOING ALL THE REQUIRED TESTS, IT WAS MUSA WHO HAD THE PROBLEM THAT WAS CAUSING THE INFERTILITY. MUSA HAD A LOW SPERM COUNT. THE DOCTOR TOLD THEM THAT INTRAUTERINE INSEMINATION (IUI) PROCEDURE IS REQUIRED TO BE DONE. MUSA AND JAINABA 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 CLAMYDIA AND GONORRHOEA,
- CONSEQUENCE OF INFECTIONS CAUSED BY PRACTICE OF FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION, 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.

MUSA AND JAINABA THANKED THE DOCTOR AND WENT HOME.

MUSA AND JAINABA AGREED TO UNDERGO THE INTRAUTERINE INSEMINATION (IUI) PROCEDURE



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



MUSA WAITED PATIENTLY.

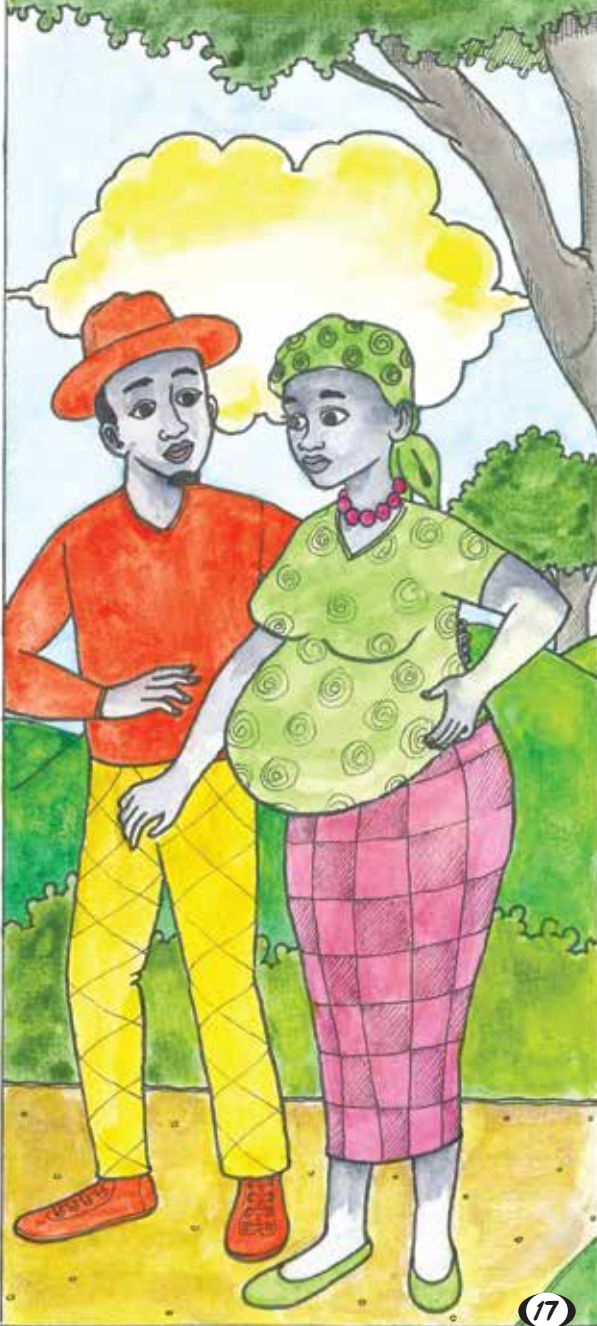


THE DOCTOR PLACED MUSA'S SPERM INSIDE JAINABA'S UTERUS TO FACILITATE FERTILIZATION.



JAINABA 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 MUSA JAINABA



THEY BOTH SMILED AND WENT ON...



MUSA AND JAINABA WERE HAPPY TO FINALLY HAVE A BABY.

I AM HAPPY NOW I AM A FATHER.

NO MUSA YOU ARE MORE THAN A FATHER



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



MUSA SMILED

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



ONE DAY, MUSAMET FATOU AND EBRIMA 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

#NoToInfertilityStigma

#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 infertility.

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Musa's Story

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

the author

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